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Portrait of Robespierre.

Photo-Etching. — From Drawing by Raffet.

Illustrated Holiday Edition

*COMTESSE DE
CHARNY*

VOLUME II

*BY
ALEXANDRE DUMAS*
//



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LA COMTESSE DE CHARNY.

VOLUME II.

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LA COMTESSE DE CHARNY.



CHAPTER I.

CAGLIOSTRO'S PREDICTION IS FULFILLED.

ABOUT one o'clock on the afternoon of that same day, the head-gaoler of the Châtelet, with four armed men, descended into Monsieur de Favras' dungeon, and informed him that he was about to appear before his judges.

The marquis had been warned of this fact during the previous night by Cagliostro, and also about nine o'clock in the morning by the assistant superintendent of the prison.

The hearing of the case had begun at nine o'clock that morning, and at three o'clock in the afternoon it was still going on.

Ever since the doors opened, the court-room had been thronged by a crowd eager to get a glimpse of the man upon whom sentence of death was to be pronounced; for every one felt that the prisoner's conviction was certain, for in political conspiracies there are unfortunates whose sacrifice is a foregone conclusion.

Forty judges were seated on a circular dais at the upper end of the hall. The seat of the president was surmounted by a canopy, and behind him was a painting of the Crucifixion of Christ; while opposite it, at the other end of the hall, hung a portrait of the king.

A row of National Grenadiers surrounded the hall, both inside and out, and the door was guarded by four men.

At quarter-past three the judges ordered the accused to be brought in, and a detachment of a dozen grenadiers, who had been awaiting this order with muskets at their sides, immediately marched out. Every eye, even those of the judges, was turned towards the door by which Favras must enter.

In about ten minutes four of the grenadiers reappeared; behind them walked Favras; the eight remaining grenadiers followed him.

The prisoner entered in the midst of a silence that was oppressive in its breathless expectancy. His face was calm, and his toilet had evidently been made with scrupulous care. He wore a grey silk coat richly embroidered, a white satin waistcoat, knee-breeches of the same material as his coat, silk stockings, and buckled shoes; and the cross of St. Louis hung from his button-hole.

His hair, too, was dressed with scrupulous care, and thickly powdered; as the Two Friends of Liberty remark in their "History of the Revolution," not a single hair was out of place.

Several seconds elapsed between the prisoner's entrance and the first words addressed to him by the chief magistrate. At last the judge made the customary gesture for enforcing silence, though it was entirely unnecessary in this instance, and asked, in a voice in which a slight tremor was apparent, —

"Who are you?"

"I am the accused," responded Favras, with unruffled calmness.

"What is your name?"

"Thomas Mahi, Marquis de Favras."

"Whence did you come?"

"From Blois."

"Your business?"

"A colonel in the king's service."

"Your residence?"

"No. 21 Place Royale."

"Your age?"

"Forty-six years."

"Be seated."

The marquis obeyed. Not until then did the crowd appear to breathe again; and their respiration sounded like a terrible blast of wind, — a blast of vengeance.

The prisoner did not shrink when he looked about him and saw so many eyes gleaming with hatred, and fists threateningly clenched. A moment later he recognised amid the excited throng the calm countenance and sympathising eyes of his nocturnal visitor, and, saluting him with an almost imperceptible gesture, he quietly continued his survey of the crowd.

"Prisoner, hold yourself in readiness to answer."

Favras bowed.

"I am entirely at your service, Monsieur le Président," he said courteously.

A second examination began, — an examination which the prisoner sustained as coolly as the first.

The witnesses for the prosecution were next summoned.

Though Favras was unwilling to save his life by flight, he wished to defend it by argument, and fourteen witnesses had been summoned for the defence; but after the evidence for the prosecution had been given, the president said, —

"Gentlemen, all the evidence has been heard."

"Pardon me, monsieur," said Favras, with all his accustomed courtesy; "you forgot one thing, — though it is really of no very great importance: you neglected to hear the fourteen witnesses summoned at my request."

"The court has decided that no more witnesses shall be heard."

The face of the prisoner darkened, and lightning flashed from his eyes.

"I supposed I was to be tried by the Châtelet Court,"

he remarked. "I was mistaken; it seems I am to be tried according to the rules of the Spanish Inquisition."

"Remove the prisoner," thundered the judge.

Favras was conducted back to prison, his exit from the court-room being attended with savage yells and howls from the throng.

Favras went to bed at his usual hour. About one o'clock in the morning the turnkey, Louis, came in and awakened him, giving as an excuse the delivery of a bottle of wine the prisoner had not ordered.

"The judges are about to pronounce your sentence, monsieur," he said.

"If it was merely to tell me this you awakened me, my friend, you had better have let me sleep."

"No, marquis, I woke you to ask if you had not some message for the person who visited you last night."

"No, nothing."

"But think, monsieur. When the sentence of death is pronounced, you will be more closely guarded, and powerful as that gentleman is, he may be obliged to contend with impossibilities."

"Thanks, my friend; but I have no favours to ask of him, either now or hereafter."

"Then I am sorry I woke you; but you would have been disturbed within an hour, any way."

"So you think it will hardly be worth while for me to go to sleep again," said Favras, smiling.

"Wait and judge for yourself."

In fact, they could already hear a great hubbub on the floor above, — doors opening and shutting, and the butt-ends of muskets striking upon the floor.

"Am I the cause of all this commotion?" asked Favras.

"They are coming in person to announce the verdict."

"The deuce! Ask the gentlemen to give me time to get into my clothes, won't you?"

The gaoler went out, closing the door behind him; but the marquis had only partially completed his toilet when

it opened again. As the registrar of the court entered, the marquis pushed his open collar still further back, and exclaimed, —

"I await you in fighting trim, you see, monsieur," passing his hand over his uncovered throat, ready for the sword or the rope, as the case might be; "go on, monsieur, I am all attention."

A strikingly handsome picture he made, with his head thrown proudly back, his hair partially disarranged, and his lace-trimmed shirt disclosing to view his stalwart breast.

The registrar read, or rather mumbled out, the sentence of the court.

The marquis was condemned to die; he was to read his death sentence in public in front of Notre Dame, and be hanged on the Place de Grève.

Favras listened with the utmost calmness. He did not even wince at the word "hanged,"—a word so terrible to a nobleman's ears; only, after a moment's silence, he remarked, looking the registrar full in the face, "I pity you, sir, for being obliged to condemn a man on such meagre proofs."

The registrar attempted no reply, but merely said, "Monsieur, you know the consolations of religion are all that are left you now."

"You are mistaken, monsieur; I also have the consolation of a conscience void of offence. I should like to see a confessor, however, but not a confessor sent by those who assassinate me. I should have no confidence in such a one. I am willing to deliver my body up to your tender mercies, but not my soul. I should like to see the curé of St. Paul, if you have no objections."

Two hours later the venerable priest he had named was in his cell.

CHAPTER II.

THE PLACE DE GRÈVE.

THESE two hours were by no means devoid of incident, however, for the registrar had hardly departed before two other men entered the room. It was the sheriff and an assistant.

"Follow me," said one of them.

Favras bowed his assent.

"May I have time to dress?"

"Yes."

With the aid of the little mirror hanging on the wall, Favras arranged his shirt-collar and frill, and gave the most aristocratic possible turn to the bow of his cravat.

"Shall I take my hat?" he asked, after he had slipped on his coat and vest.

"It is not necessary."

Meanwhile, the man who had not spoken looked at Favras in such a way as to attract his attention. It even seemed to Favras that he made an almost imperceptible sign to him, but so quickly that the marquis was still in doubt; so he troubled himself no more about the matter, but, waving his hand in token of farewell to the goaler, Louis, exclaimed, —

"All right, gentlemen, lead the way; I will follow."

They ascended many steps, and then walked on until they came to a heavy oaken door, bristling with iron spikes. It opened, and Favras was pushed inside.

He saw that he was in the torture chamber, and his face turned a trifle pale.

"Heavens! gentlemen," he exclaimed, "you ought to give a man a little warning before you take him into a place like this."

He had scarcely uttered these words when the two men threw themselves upon him and tore off his coat and waistcoat, as well as his cravat, and tied his hands behind his back. As he fulfilled his portion of this task, the man Favras had noticed before whispered in his ear, "Will you be saved? There is still time."

The marquis shook his head.

A sort of rack, known as the wooden horse, was already prepared, and they stretched the marquis upon it. The torturer approached with his apron full of oaken wedges, and an iron mallet in his hand. Favras extended his shapely leg, still adorned with its silk stocking and high-heeled shoe, to the man, but the sheriff raised his hand.

"That is enough; the court spares the prisoner the torture."

"Ah! it would seem that the court is afraid I may speak out. I am none the less thankful, however, as I shall go to my death on two sound legs, and that is something. Meanwhile, gentlemen, I am at your service."

"You are to spend an hour in this hall," said the sheriff.

"And a very interesting, if not altogether cheerful, place it is," remarked Favras, beginning to walk about and examine the different instruments of torture, not unlike gigantic spiders and scorpions in form, with which the room was filled. He asked for the name of each, with a coolness that astonished even the torturers; and one of them inquired as to what was the prisoner's object in asking so many questions.

"I may meet his Satanic Majesty on the journey I am about to take," answered Favras, laughing, "and I might make a friend of him by telling him of such instruments of torture as he has never even heard of."

As the prisoner completed his examination, the prison clock struck five. Two hours had elapsed since the

marquis left his cell, and he was now conducted back to it. He found the curé of St. Paul there.

On seeing him, the venerable priest opened his arms.

"Excuse me, father, if I can only open my heart to you," said Favras; "these gentlemen have taken good care I shall open nothing else."

"Can you not release the arms of the condemned during the little time he is with me?" inquired the kind-hearted old priest.

"It is not in my power to do so," replied the sheriff.

"Then ask them if they will not bind my hands in front of me, instead of behind me, my father," said Favras. "It will make it much more convenient for me to hold the candle when I read my sentence."

The assistant looked inquiringly at the sheriff, who nodded, as if to indicate that he saw no objection to granting this request, and the prisoner was left alone with the priest.

What took place during this solemn interview between the man of the world and the man of God is known only to themselves; but when the officers re-entered the cell, they found the prisoner awaiting them with a smiling face, dry eyes, and a stout heart.

They came to tell him it was time to die.

"Pardon me, gentlemen, but it is you who have kept me waiting," he replied pleasantly.

As he had already been divested of coat and vest, they removed his shoes and hose, and slipped a white shirt over the rest of his clothing. On his breast they placed a placard bearing the words, "A Conspirator against the State."

A tumbrel surrounded by a numerous guard was waiting at the prison gate.

At the sight of the condemned the people clapped their hands with delight; for they were beginning to lose patience, as they had been waiting for hours. Favras climbed into the waggon, and the curé of St. Paul followed

him, taking a seat at his left hand. The executioner mounted last. It was the same kind, benevolent-faced man we saw at the Bicêtre prison when Guillotin's invention was first tested, and we shall meet him often, — this real hero of the epoch upon which we are entering.

When the tumbrel started, there was a like movement in the crowd; and Favras, who saw several men press forward to secure places in the foremost rank, could not repress a start when he perceived among them, attired in the dress of a marketman, the nocturnal visitor who had promised to watch over him until the last.

The waggon paused in front of the cathedral of Notre Dame, the central door of which stood open, so as to allow a view of the grand altar, aflame with candles, at the other end of the darkened church.

The priest alighted first, then the marquis, and then the hangman, holding one end of the rope, which he had slipped around the prisoner's neck.

The prisoner's wrists were tied rather loosely, in order to allow him some use of his hands. In his right hand they placed a lighted torch, in his left his death sentence. The condemned advanced to the portico and knelt. Close to him he saw the same pretended marketman and his companions, whom he had noticed when he left the Châtelet. This persistency of endeavour seemed to touch Favras deeply; but not a word of appeal passed his lips.

A clerk from the Châtelet court was in attendance.

"Read, monsieur," he said in a loud voice; then added, in a whisper, "If you wish to be saved, you have only to say the word."

Without making any reply, the prisoner began to read his sentence in a firm voice, which did not indicate the slightest mental perturbation.

When the reading was concluded, he turned to the crowd and said, —

"Being about to appear before my God, I forgive those men who, contrary to the dictates of their own consciences,

have accused and convicted me of criminal designs. I love my king, and I shall die faithful to him. By so doing, I hope to leave an example which will be followed by many loyal hearts. The populace clamour for my death; they demand a victim! So be it. I am glad this test falls upon me instead of upon some weak-hearted person, who might be filled with despair by the sight of the scaffold. — Now, unless we have some further business here, gentlemen, suppose we move on; though, if you have no objection, I should like to enter the Hôtel de Ville awhile. I desire to make my will, and I have heard that this request is never refused a condemned prisoner.”

So, instead of going straight to the gallows, the waggon turned in the direction of the Hôtel de Ville, on the opposite side of the square.

A fierce yell went up from the crowd.

“He’s going to confess! he’s going to confess!” was shouted on every side.

On hearing this cry, a close observer might have noticed that a young man dressed in black, who was standing upon a horse-block at the corner of the Quay Pelletier, turned very pale.

“Have no fears, Count Louis,” said a satirical voice near him; “the prisoner will not say a word in regard to what took place in the Place Royale.”

The man in black turned hastily. The words had been uttered by a marketman, whose face could not be seen; for, as he spoke, he pulled his big hat far down over his eyes.

If the young man still felt any misgivings, they were soon dispelled, however.

As he reached the top of the flight of steps leading into the Hôtel de Ville, Favras made a sign that he wished to speak; and on the instant every sound was hushed as if by magic.

“Gentlemen, I hear it said around me that I am going into the Hôtel de Ville to make a confession. It is not

so; and in case there be any man among you — as is quite possible — who has any cause to fear such a confession on my part, he may rest easy, for I am only going to make my last will and testament.”

With a firm step he passed under the gloomy archway and up the staircase to the room to which prisoners are generally conducted at such times.

Three men dressed in black were there on duty, and one of them Favras recognised as the same clerk who had spoken to him near the cathedral.

As the prisoner could not write with bound hands, he began to dictate his will.

We have heard much said concerning the testament of Louis XVI., because much is always said of royal documents; but we have that of Favras before us, and we say to the public, “Read and compare.”

His will finished, Favras asked the privilege of reading it over before signing it. They untied his hands, and the papers were given to him. He read each sheet carefully, correcting such mistakes in spelling as the clerk had made, and then signed his name, Mahi de Favras, at the bottom of each page. After that, he held out his hands in order that they might be bound again, — a task which was performed this time by the executioner, who had not left his side for an instant. The dictation of the will had taken nearly two hours, and the people, many of whom had been waiting since early morning, became impatient, and began to murmur. It was the same ominous murmur, gradually changing into a dull angry roar, which had been heard on the same spot when De Launay was butchered, when Foulon was hanged, and Berthier torn asunder.

It began to be whispered about, too, that Favras had been allowed to make his escape through a back street, and threats of hanging the municipal officers and demolishing the Hôtel de Ville were already rife among the crowd. Fortunately, about nine o'clock the prisoner reappeared. The soldiers, who formed a living hedge around the square,

were provided with torches; the windows of the neighbouring houses were brilliantly lighted. The gallows alone remained shrouded in darkness.

The reappearance of the condemned was greeted with loud cries of exultation; for the crowd was not only sure now that he had not escaped, but that he could not escape.

Favras glanced around him, and, seeing no carriage in waiting, he murmured, with an ironical smile, "Ah, royalty is forgetful. They were more polite to Count Horn than to me."

"That was because Horn was an assassin, while you, — you are a martyr," said a voice beside him.

Favras turned, and saw the same marketman who had followed him so closely ever since he left the prison.

"Farewell, monsieur," said Favras; "I hope you will testify in my behalf, if need be."

As Favras placed his foot upon the first step leading up to the scaffold, a voice cried, "Jump, marquis!"

"Citizens, I die innocent; pray for me," was the prisoner's only response, uttered in a clear but solemn voice.

On the fourth step he paused again, and, in a voice as firm and clear as before, called out, "Citizens, I ask your prayers; I die innocent."

At the eighth step — that from which he was to be launched into eternity — he repeated a third time, "Citizens, I die innocent; pray for me."

Even then one of the hangman's assistants, who had mounted the steps with him, whispered, "Will you consent to be saved?"

"No, my friend; but may Heaven reward you for your good intentions!"

Then, bowing to the executioner, who seemed to be awaiting an order instead of giving it, Favras said, "Do your duty."

He had hardly uttered the words when his body was swung off into space.

During the scene of uproar that ensued the young man dressed in black jumped from the horse-block on which he was standing, and, after making his way through the crowd to the Pont Neuf, sprang into a carriage that was in waiting there, shouting to the coachman, "To the Luxembourg, as fast as you can go!"

The horses started off at a gallop. The arrival of the occupant of the vehicle had been awaited with great impatience by Monsieur de Provence and two of his friends, as they would have dined two hours before but for their anxiety. The cook, too, was in despair, for this was the third dinner he had prepared; and this, which had been ready now at least ten minutes, would be utterly ruined in another quarter of an hour.

At this critical moment they heard a carriage dash into the courtyard.

Provence hurried to the window, but, unable to distinguish anything in the darkness, he left the window and ran towards the door; but before the future king of France reached it, — his gait being always somewhat halting, — the door opened, and the young man dressed in black entered.

"All is over, your Highness!" he exclaimed. "Monsieur de Favras died without uttering a word."

"Then we can eat our dinner with a tranquil mind, my dear Louis."

"Yes, your Highness. By my faith, he was a gallant gentleman!"

"I quite agree with you, my dear fellow," said his Royal Highness. "Let us drink to his health. And now to dinner, gentlemen."

As he spoke, the folding-doors were thrown open, and the illustrious host and his guests entered the dining-room.

CHAPTER III.

THE MONARCHY IS SAVED.

A FEW days after the execution we have just described in detail, in order to warn our readers what gratitude they may expect from kings and princes if they sacrifice their lives for them, a man mounted upon a grey horse was slowly riding up the avenue at St. Cloud.

The slowness of his progress should not be attributed to lassitude on the part of the rider, or fatigue on the part of his steed; for both had come only a short distance, and the foam that escaped from the horse's mouth was not the result of over-driving, but of unwelcome restraint.

What retarded the horseman was the deep thought in which he was evidently absorbed, and possibly, too, his desire not to reach his destination until a certain hour, which had not yet arrived.

He was a man about forty years of age, whose remarkable ugliness had something almost grand about it. His disproportionately large head, bloated cheeks, skin pitted with small-pox, animated expression, flashing eyes, and lips made for cutting irony and biting sarcasm, all indicated their possessor to be a man destined to occupy a prominent place and make a great stir in the world.

But one vaguely felt that this man was the victim of one of those organic maladies against which the most vigorous constitutions struggle in vain; for his complexion was dull and grey, his eyes were weary and bloodshot, and his jaws overweighted with flesh, — the beginning of an unwholesome obesity.

On reaching the top of the avenue, he turned unhesitatingly into the gate leading into the courtyard of the palace.

On the right, between two buildings that formed a sort of lane, a man was standing, evidently waiting.

He motioned the rider to come in that direction. A gate was standing open, and the attendant led the way through this gate. The rider followed him, this time into another courtyard. Here the man paused, and, after glancing round and satisfying himself that the place was deserted, he approached the rider, hat in hand. The rider, by leaning over his horse's neck, brought himself nearer on a level with him.

"Is this Monsieur Weber?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Comte de Mirabeau, is it not?"

"The same," responded the rider, springing to the ground more lightly than one would have supposed possible.

"Step inside, and be kind enough to wait a moment, while I take your horse to the stable myself."

As he spoke, he opened the door of a room overlooking the park.

Mirabeau entered, and spent the few moments of waiting in removing the leather leggings that protected his silk stockings and irreproachably polished shoes from the dust.

Weber returned very soon, according to promise.

"Come, Monsieur le Comte," he said, "the queen is waiting for you."

"Waiting for me! Have I been so unfortunate as to keep her Majesty waiting? I thought I was exactly on time."

"I mean that the queen is impatient to see you. Come, monsieur."

Weber opened a door leading out into the garden, and led the way through a labyrinth of paths to the loneliest and most elevated part of the park.

There, in the midst of a clump of trees, whose bare gaunt branches stood out in bold relief against the cheerless sky, stood one of those summer-houses known by the name of kiosks.

All the shutters of this pavilion had been tightly closed,

except two, and even these were drawn so close together that only a ray or two of light could enter, as through the narrow loopholes in tower walls, — barely light enough, in fact, to make the darkness visible.

A fine fire was blazing on the hearth, however, and two lighted candelabra were burning on the mantel-piece.

Weber ushered the visitor into a sort of ante-chamber; then, opening the door of the principal room, announced, "The Comte Riquetti de Mirabeau!" then he stood aside to allow the count to pass in. If he had listened, he could certainly have heard the visitor's heart beating in his broad breast.

On hearing the announcement, a lady at the farther end of the room arose and took several steps forward, but apparently not without a certain amount of hesitation, and even fear. This lady was the queen.

Her heart, too, was throbbing violently. Here, before her very eyes, was this hated, dangerous man who had been accused of causing the horrors of the fifth and sixth of October, — the man to whom Royalty had turned once before in its hour of need, but whose services had been subsequently rejected through the interposition of self-interested courtiers, but who had since made his sovereigns realise the great necessity of conciliating him by two outbursts of wrath which seemed almost sublime in their power and majesty.

The first of these was his apostrophe to the clergy; the second, the discourse in which he explained how and why the representatives of the people had constituted themselves the National Assembly.

Mirabeau advanced with a grace and courtesy which the queen was surprised to see in a man of his energetic organisation; but after proceeding a few steps, he paused respectfully, and waited for his sovereign to speak, — which she did in a voice from which she did not entirely succeed in banishing all trace of emotion.

"Monsieur de Mirabeau," she began, "Doctor Gilbert

assured us some time ago that you were willing to ally yourself with us."

Mirabeau bowed his assent.

"Overtures were made to you, to which you responded by proposing a new cabinet," continued the queen.

Again Mirabeau bowed.

"It was not our fault that this plan failed," resumed the queen.

"I am aware of that, madame; but the failure of the scheme was due, at least in part, to persons who profess to be devoted to you and to the interests of the monarchy."

"Can you wonder at it?" asked the queen. "This is one of the greatest misfortunes of people in our position. Kings can no more choose their friends than they can choose their enemies; sometimes, too, they are compelled to accept the most ill-judged and disastrous devotion. We are surrounded by men who wish to save us, but who are really ruining us. Their determination to exclude all members of the Assembly from the king's cabinet is one specimen of their blundering. Shall I mention another? Would you believe it possible that one of my most faithful friends, a man who, I am sure, would willingly die for us, — would you believe it possible that this man, without giving us the slightest hint of his intentions, brought to our dinner — which is generally eaten under the eye of the public, as you know — the widow and children of Monsieur de Favras, all three dressed in deep mourning? My first impulse was to spring up and rush to them, and place the fatherless children of the man who had so courageously and nobly died for us between the king and myself. Every eye was riveted upon us; for every one was waiting to see what we should do. I turned, and whom do you suppose I saw standing behind me, not four steps from my arm-chair? Santerre, the man from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine! I sank back in my chair, almost crying with rage, yet not daring to bestow another glance on the widow and orphans. The royalists censure me for not making

a public display of my sympathy; the revolutionists are furious, believing the visitors were brought at my request, or at least with my sanction. Oh, monsieur, there is indeed little hope for us when we are attacked by men of such signal ability, and defended only by men who are very estimable, doubtless, but who have no conception of our real position."

And the queen, sighing heavily, pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Madame," said Mirabeau, touched by this allusion to misfortunes of which he was fully cognisant, "when you speak of men who attack you, I trust your Majesty does not allude to me. I professed monarchical principles even when I was aware of the corruption of the court, and understood neither the mind nor the heart of the august daughter of Maria Theresa; I fought for the rights of the throne even when my efforts only excited suspicion, and all my measures were misinterpreted into malicious snares; I served the king when I knew I had nothing to expect from him. What can I not achieve, now that my failing courage is revived by your confidence? for your Majesty's most gracious reception of me makes monarchical principles a pleasure, as well as a duty. It is late in the day, very late, I know, madame," he continued, shaking his head. "In asking me to save it, the monarchy is perhaps only asking me to perish with it. If I had deliberated coolly, doubtless I should have chosen some other time for this interview than a day so closely following his Majesty's relinquishment to the deputies of the famous 'Red Book,' or, in other words, of the honour of his friends."

"Oh, monsieur, is it possible that you consider the king capable of such an act of treachery? that you do not know how the thing came about? The 'Red Book,' though almost forced from the king, would never have been delivered up to the committee if they had not promised to guard it religiously. They kept their promise by having it printed. The committee was to blame, you see, not the king."

“Alas! madame, you know the causes that led to a publication against which I earnestly protested, as a man of honour, and of which I disapproved as a deputy. At the very moment the king was swearing allegiance to the constitution, he had an authorised agent at Turin among the bitterest enemies of this very constitution. While he was talking of financial reforms, and apparently acceding to those proposed by the Assembly, costly stables under the management of the Prince de Lambesc — whom the Parisians hate, and for whose execution they are daily clamouring — were established at Trèves. Enormous amounts, too, have been paid to Artois and Condé, and other fugitives; and this in spite of a decree passed two months ago, which suppressed all such pensions. True, the king omitted to sanction this decree. What else could you expect, madame, when you remember that for more than two months strenuous efforts had been made in vain to find out what had become of more than sixty million francs? The king was entreated to say what had become of this money, but he refused; the members of the committee consequently considered themselves absolved from their promise, and ordered the ‘Red Book’ printed. Why, oh, why did the king give up a weapon that could be so cruelly used against him?”

“Ah, monsieur, if you were a member of the king’s council, I am sure you would not advise such disastrous concessions on his part, — concessions which not only ruin, but dishonour him!”

“If I were honoured with a seat in the royal council, madame, it would be as a defender of a monarchy regulated by just laws, — as the champion, too, of liberty guaranteed by monarchical power. This liberty, madame, has three bitter enemies, — the clergy, the nobility, and the royal parliament; and not until after the clerical power is annihilated, and the royal parliament permanently dissolved, can the executive power of the Crown revive, and combine royal authority with popular legislation. As for

the nobility, I do not see how we can do without them, for without the nobility there can be no monarchy; but they must be held in check, and this can only be effected by a coalition between the people and royalty. There you have my political policy. If it be the king's also, let him adopt it; if it is not the king's, let him repudiate it."

"I do not know, monsieur, whether these are, or are not, the king's political views, but I know they are mine. Only tell me the means of arriving at this most desirable end, and I will listen, not only with avidity, but with heartfelt gratitude."

Mirabeau glanced at the queen, and saw that if she was not already convinced, she was in a fair way to be; and his triumph over so haughty a woman as Marie Antoinette flattered his vanity prodigiously.

"We have lost Paris, or nearly lost it, madame," he replied; "but there are still hosts of royalists scattered through the provinces, and it is upon them that we must chiefly depend. That is why I should strongly advise the king to leave Paris, but not France, — to retire, for instance, to Rouen, accompanied by his army, and from there issue ordinances which will be more popular to his people than the edicts of the Assembly. Then there need not be, nor, indeed, could there be, any civil war, as the king would be more of a revolutionist than the Revolution itself."

"But does not this Revolution, whether it precedes or follows us, terrify you, monsieur?"

"Alas! madame, I realise, I believe, better than any one else, the part the Revolution must play in the matter, — it must have its piece of cake to quiet it. As I have already had the honour to say, the reconstruction of the monarchy on its former basis is an utter impossibility. All France, from the king to the poorest of his subjects, has united in demanding a new order of things, — either intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly. It is not the old monarchy I shall attempt to defend, but a form of government very like that which has raised England

to the zenith of its power and glory. Does not the thought of the imprisonment and death of Charles I. make his Majesty better content with the throne of William III. or of George I.?"

"Oh, Monsieur le Comte!" cried the queen, to whose mind the frightful vision seen at the Château de Taverny had been vividly recalled by Mirabeau's words, "if you will but establish such a monarchy for us, you shall see if we are such ingrates as we are represented to be!"

"That is precisely what I will do, madame," replied Mirabeau, moved to enthusiasm in his turn. "If the king will but sustain me, and the queen encourage me, here at your feet I give you my oath as a nobleman that I will accomplish what I have promised, or perish in the attempt, with my armour on, fighting till the last."

"Count, count, do not forget that it is not one woman alone who hears your vow, but a dynasty of five hundred years, — seventy kings of France, from Pharamond down to Louis V., who will be humiliated with us, if our throne should crumble into dust."

"I know the sacred obligations I assume. The task is a prodigious one, but it is not greater than my will or my devotion. If I can be sure of the sympathy of my queen and the confidence of my king, I feel equal to any undertaking."

"If such a pledge only is needed, I can promise you both," replied the queen, with the Circe-like smile that won all hearts. She bowed as she spoke, and Mirabeau understood that his audience was at an end.

The pride of the politician was satisfied, but his vanity as a gallant craved something more.

"Madame," he said, with bold but respectful courtesy, "when your august mother, the Empress Maria Theresa, admitted a subject into her presence, she never dismissed him without offering him her hand to kiss."

Then he stood silently waiting.

She looked at this chained lion, who asked nothing

better than to crouch at her feet; then, with a smile of triumph wreathing her lips, she slowly extended her hand, — that beautiful hand, cold as alabaster, and almost as transparent.

Mirabeau, bowing low, pressed his lips upon it; then, throwing back his head proudly, exclaimed, “Madame, by this kiss the monarchy is saved.”

He left the room deeply moved, but equally joyful and elated; for he, poor man of genius, firmly believed in the fulfilment of the prophecy he had just made.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FARMER'S RETURN.

WHILE Marie Antoinette is forgetting, for a time at least, her sufferings as a woman in her anxiety for her safety as a queen, we will take our reader, weary, doubtless, of so much politics, back among more humble people, and into a less tainted atmosphere.

Farmer Billot's return to the farm took place the second day after the famous night in which three important events occurred; namely, Sebastian Gilbert's flight to Paris, Isidore de Charny's departure for the same city, and Catherine's swoon on the road between Villers-Cotterets and Pisseleu.

As they journeyed homeward together, Farmer Billot catechised Pitou closely about this fainting fit. The worthy man loved his farm and his wife well, but he loved his daughter better; and he racked his brain with all sorts of conjectures as to the probable cause of this accident. But to all his companion's questions, Pitou's invariable answer was, "I don't know;" and he deserved the more credit for this response, from the fact that Catherine had been cruelly frank in telling him all, and Pitou consequently did know perfectly well.

Pitou loved Catherine devotedly, and admired her as much as he loved her; but though he had suffered deeply on account of his unrequited passion, he had never been reduced to a fainting condition in consequence of it; so, reasoning out the matter in his customary manner, he said to himself, —

"If Mademoiselle Catherine loves Isidore so much that she swoons when he goes away, then she loves Isidore

more than I love Mademoiselle Catherine, for I never swooned on parting from her. Now, if she loves him more than I love her, she must suffer more than I do, — in which case she suffers very much; and she does suffer more than I do, as she fainted, while I never swooned in my life.”

Billot's anxiety increased so much as he approached his home that he sought relief in frequent blows on the flanks of the horse he had hired in Dammartin; and so effectual were his efforts in this direction that by four o'clock in the afternoon the cart drew up before the door of the farmhouse, and Billot jumped down and rushed into the house. But here he encountered an unexpected obstacle on the threshold of his daughter's chamber, in the shape of Doctor Raynal, a man whom we have had occasion to mention before in this narrative, and who now declared that any excitement in Catherine's present condition would not only be dangerous, but might possibly prove fatal, as she was suffering from an attack of brain fever which threatened to reach a high degree of intensity.

Doctor Raynal was fighting the malady with all the remedies in vogue with medical experts in those days, mustard plasters and bleeding included; but, in spite of this vigorous treatment, the disease had not been conquered, and since morning Catherine had been a prey to violent delirium.

In her delirium the girl had doubtless made some startling revelations; so, under pretext of shielding her from excitement, the doctor had kept her mother out of the room, as he now intended to keep the father. Mother Billot was sitting on a stool in one corner of the big fireplace, with her head buried in her hands, and apparently oblivious to all that was going on around her.

Not until she heard Billot's voice did she seem to awake from her lethargy; then she tottered forward, and threw herself upon Billot's breast. Her husband gazed at her in a wild sort of way, as if he hardly knew her.

“What has been going on here?” he asked.

"Your daughter," said the doctor, "has what is called acute meningitis; and patients suffering from that disease must be kept very quiet."

"But is it dangerous? Will she die?"

"People die of all sorts of diseases; but if you will let me manage this case in my own way, your daughter will not die."

"But can I not see her?"

"If I do allow you to see her, will you leave me in peace for three days?"

"I swear it."

"Very well; come in."

The doctor opened the door. Catherine was lying on the bed, with eyes glittering wildly, cheeks flushed with fever, and her forehead covered with a wet bandage. She muttered a few incoherent words now and then, and as her father pressed his trembling lips upon her brow, he fancied he caught the name of Isidore.

Faithful to his promise, the farmer retired to the kitchen, accompanied by his wife. Pitou was about to follow him, when the doctor suddenly caught him by the sleeve and whispered hastily, "Don't leave the farm-house; I want to see you."

Five minutes afterwards the door of the chamber opened again, and the doctor's voice was heard calling Pitou.

"Eh! what do you want with me, doctor?"

"I want you to come and help Madame Clement hold Catherine while I bleed her for the third time."

"For the third time!" moaned Mother Billot; "they're going to bleed her for the third time! oh, my God!"

"Woman, all this would never have happened if you had watched over your daughter better," exclaimed Billot, sternly.

CHAPTER V.

PITOU AS A NURSE.

PITOU was very much surprised to hear that he could be of any service in the sick-room; and he would have been even more amazed had he known that the aid he was expected to render was of a mental rather than physical nature.

The doctor had noticed that Catherine generally coupled Pitou's name with Isidore's in her delirium; and from the difference in the tone in which she uttered these names, a close observer like Doctor Raynal soon discovered that Ange Pitou must be the name of the friend, and Isidore that of the lover; so he thought it would be an advantage to the invalid to have the friend with her, in order that she might be able to talk of the lover. Now, everybody in Villers-Cotterets knew that George de Charny had been killed at Versailles on that terrible night, and that his brother Isidore had left for Paris on the evening of the following day. This conjuncture of facts made it very easy for the doctor to discover the real nature of Catherine's malady, and he reasoned something in this wise:—

“What a person afflicted with brain trouble needs most is quiet. What will insure Catherine this tranquillity of mind? News of her absent lover's whereabouts. From whom can she obtain this news? From some one who knew about him. And who so likely to know about him as Pitou, who has just returned from Paris?”

Another slight flow of blood reduced the fever somewhat; the patient's breathing became more regular; her pulse fell from one hundred and ten to eighty-five; and everything seemed to indicate a quiet night for the girl.

Motioning to Pitou to follow him, the doctor, after having given Madame Clement all necessary instructions, returned to the kitchen, where they found poor Mother Billot still sitting, as if stunned, in the chimney-corner.

"Come, come, take courage, Mother Billot!" said the doctor, cheerfully. "Don't be worried; your daughter won't have a bad night. But mind what I say, — neither you nor Father Billot are to set foot in the sick-room."

"It is hard, very hard, that a mother cannot go into her child's room. Who is to take care of my poor girl?"

"You need feel no anxiety on that score. Haven't we Madame Clement and Pitou?"

"What! Pitou?"

"Yes, Pitou. I find him very capable. I'm going to take him with me now to the village to have a prescription put up. Pitou will bring it back, and Madame Clement will administer it according to my directions. If I should be needed, Pitou, who is to sit up with Madame Clement, will set his long legs going, and be at my house in ten minutes, eh, Pitou?"

"In *five*, doctor!" responded Pitou, with a confidence in himself that left no room for doubt in the minds of his hearers.

Pitou kept his word; for in the course of a quarter of an hour he returned with a sedative adorned with the label of Master Pacquenaud, the village apothecary.

On his return, Catherine was asleep, as the physician had prophesied; and near her, stretched out in a big arm-chair, with her feet resting on the andirons, was the nurse, a prey to the drowsiness peculiar to the honourable class to which she belonged. Having neither the right to sleep, nor the strength to keep awake, these nurses remind one of Virgil's unfortunate ghosts; forbidden to ascend to fields Elysian, and yet unable to endure the light of day, they haunt the realms of shadow, continually hovering between sleep and wakefulness.

About an hour after Pitou's return, Catherine moved

slightly, sighed, and opened her eyes. We must do Mother Clement the justice to say that she was at the patient's bedside almost instantly, stammering, "Here I am. Do you want anything, mademoiselle?"

"I'm so thirsty," murmured the sick girl, brought back to consciousness by physical suffering.

The nurse poured a little of the sleeping potion Pitou had brought into a spoon, and inserted the spoon between Catherine's parched lips and closed teeth. The girl swallowed the medicine, and then let her head fall back on the pillow again; so the nurse, satisfied that her duty was fulfilled, went back to her comfortable arm-chair again.

Pitou supposed Catherine had not seen him, and heaved a sigh; but Pitou was mistaken. When he assisted Madame Clement in raising the girl's head, Catherine had half opened her eyes, and, through the sort of mist which had seemed to obscure her vision for the last two or three days, she fancied she caught a glimpse of Pitou; but whether it was the real Pitou, or only one of those phantoms which had been appearing, only to vanish, ever since the fever set in, she could not tell. Pitou's sigh, though not a very loud one, somehow caused this phantom to make a deeper impression upon her mind than the others, and after being tormented some time with a doubt as to whether the person she had seen was a reality or not, she opened her eyes again, and looked around to see if he was still in the room.

It is needless to say that he had not budged; and, seeing her eyes open again and fix themselves on him, Pitou's face brightened, and he involuntarily extended his arms.

"Pitou!" she murmured.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Catherine, I knew that you loved him, but I had no idea you loved him so much as all this!"

The poor fellow uttered the words in such a manner that Catherine felt as sure of his sympathy as she did of his kindness of heart; so, without making the slightest attempt to conceal her feelings, the sick girl replied, —

"Ah, Monsieur Pitou, you see how unhappy I am!"

After that the barrier was broken down, and the tide of conversation flowed on freely.

"Though it gives me no great pleasure to talk of Monsieur Isidore," said Pitou, "I can give you some information in regard to him, if you would like to hear it."

"What! have you seen him?"

"Yes."

"And you know he reached Paris safely?"

"Yes; but he was obliged to go away almost immediately on a mission to Spain or Italy."

When Catherine heard the words "go away," her head sank back on her pillow, and she heaved a sigh, that was followed by a sudden burst of tears.

"If it is absolutely necessary that you should know where he is now, I will find out, mademoiselle," said Pitou, sadly.

"From whom?"

"From Doctor Gilbert; or, if you prefer, I'll go back to Paris for news of him. It would n't take me long."

"I thank you, my dear Pitou, but that is not necessary. I feel sure that I shall get a letter from him to-morrow morning."

"A letter from him? The deuce!" exclaimed Pitou.

"Certainly. Is it very astonishing that he should write to me?"

"I'm not astonished that he should write to you. If I were allowed to, Heaven knows I would do it quick enough,—and long letters too; but I'm afraid—"

"Afraid of what, my friend?"

"That Monsieur Isidore's letter may fall into your father's hands."

"My father's hands?"

Pitou nodded.

"My father's hands?" repeated Catherine. "Is n't my father in Paris?"

"No, your father is here at the farm; but Doctor Raynal

forbade him to come into your room because you were delirious, and I think the doctor was right."

"And why, Pitou?"

"Because your father doesn't appear to be very kindly disposed towards Monsieur Isidore; and once, when he heard you utter his name, he made a wry face, I can tell you."

Catherine grasped Pitou's hands with a vehemence that frightened him.

"You are right!" she exclaimed. "My letters must not fall into my father's hands; he would kill me! There is only one way to prevent it, but I hardly dare to tell you what it is."

"I did not suppose you had so little confidence in me, mademoiselle."

"I do not lack confidence in thee, my dear Pitou."

"That sounds better," said Pitou, much pleased.

"But it will be a hard task for thee, my friend."

"Never mind about that."

"Will you consent in advance to do what I ask?"

"Why, of course I will, if it's not an impossibility; so speak out."

"Well, go to Mother Colombe —"

"The woman who keeps the candy-shop?"

"Yes, but she is the postmistress too; and I want you to go and tell her not to deliver my letters to any one but *you*, Pitou."

"Me?" exclaimed Pitou, sighing dubiously.

"Yes, that will be much the safest way, — that is, unless you are going to refuse to help me."

"Me? *Refuse?* Why, Mademoiselle Catherine —"

"Thank you, my dear Pitou, thank you."

"I'll go; certainly I'll go, — to-morrow."

"But that will be too late. It must be done to-day."

"So be it, mademoiselle! I'll go to-day; this very morning, — right away!"

"What a brave fellow you are, Pitou, and how much I love you!"

"Don't say such things to me, Mademoiselle Catherine; you set me wild."

"See what time it is, Pitou."

Pitou looked at the girl's watch, which was hanging over the mantel.

"It is half-past five," he replied.

"Well, then —"

"Well, mademoiselle?"

"Is n't it time —"

"To go and see Mother Colombe? All right; I'm at your service. But you had better take a little medicine before I go. The doctor said you were to have a teaspoonful every hour."

"My dear Pitou, what you are doing for me is better than all the medicine on earth," replied Catherine, with a glance that went straight to Pitou's heart. "But what excuse can you make for going? It won't do for any one here to suspect your errand."

"Oh, you need n't worry about that! Shall I wake Madame Clement?"

"Oh, no; let the poor woman sleep. I don't need anything but —"

"But what?"

Catherine smiled.

"Oh, yes, I understand," murmured Cupid's messenger. Then, after a moment's silence, he added, "Well, if it is there, you shall have it; if it is n't there —"

"If it is n't there?" repeated Catherine, anxiously.

"Well, if it is n't there, — for the sake of having you look at me as you did just now; for the sake of having you smile upon me, and call me your friend, and 'dear Pitou,' as you did just now, — well, if the letter is n't there, why, I'll go to Paris for it."

"Good, kind-hearted fellow that you are!" murmured Catherine, following him with her eyes as he left the room. Then, tired by her long conversation, she sank back on her pillow again, and ten minutes later she could hardly

tell herself whether what had happened was a dream or a reality; but this much is certain,—a sensation of sweet and refreshing calmness pervaded her entire being.

As Pitou passed through the kitchen, Mother Billot raised her head and looked at him. For three days and nights she had scarcely closed her eyes; nor had she left her seat in the shadow of the big chimney-corner, where she could at least see the door of the room which she was forbidden to enter.

“How is she, Pitou?” she asked.

“Very comfortable.”

“Where are you going?”

“To Villers-Cotterets.”

“What for?”

Pitou hesitated. Petty evasions were not much in his line.

“Yes; what are you going to the village for?” demanded Father Billot, hastily emerging from his room. “The doctor said you were not to send for him unless there was some change.”

“But it seems to me it is a change when mademoiselle is so much better,” responded Pitou, promptly.

Either because Father Billot was satisfied with this reasoning, or because he did not wish to contradict a person who brought him such good news, he made no further objection to Pitou’s departure.

He reached Villers-Cotterets at quarter-past six, and woke Doctor Raynal to tell him how much better Catherine was, and to ask if anything different should be done. The doctor questioned him, and soon succeeded in discovering what had taken place almost as correctly as if he had been present. He promised to call at the farm-house in the course of the morning, however, and gave the zealous nurse to understand that the patient was to have frequent doses from the same bottle; which Pitou, after long deliberation over this enigmatical order, finally construed as meaning that he was to continue his chats about Isidore with the young girl.

From the doctor's he went straight to Mother Colombe's, who lived at the end of the Rue Lormet, at the other end of the village.

Mother Colombe was a great friend of his Aunt Angelica, but this fact did not prevent her from appreciating the nephew. Realising the necessity of resorting to persuasion, if not to bribery, in a case like this, he began operations by purchasing a lavish supply of gingerbread and candy.

These purchases made and paid for, he ventured to ask the desired favour. He found he had grave difficulties to contend with, however. Letters could be delivered only to those persons to whom they were addressed; or, at least, only to such persons as brought a written order from the owners of said letters.

Mother Colombe did not doubt Pitou's word, but she insisted upon his having a written order.

Pitou saw that he must make a sacrifice: so he promised to bring a written receipt for the letter the following day; and he strengthened this promise with a second lavish investment in candy and gingerbread. He also promised to bring an order for any other letters that might come for Catherine.

How could Mother Colombe refuse a favour to such a persuasive person, especially to a person who persuaded in such a sweet and liberal manner? So, after a few more feeble objections, Mother Colombe consented.

As he followed the good woman from her house to the post-office, he paused at the fountain, and, applying his mouth to one of the jets, he absorbed the entire stream of water, not losing a single drop for at least five minutes.

As he turned from the fountain he glanced around the square, and saw that a large staging, or platform, was in course of erection in the middle of it. This reminded him that there had been considerable talk, prior to his departure for Paris, of a convention to be held at Villers-Cotterets; though interests of a personal nature had caused him to

forget this not unimportant political event. He at once thought of the twenty-five louis Doctor Gilbert had given him to aid in putting the Haramont National Guard on the best possible footing; and he straightened himself up proudly as he thought of the fine figure he and his might present, — thanks to these twenty-five gold pieces.

This, too, helped him to digest the two huge squares of gingerbread and four big sticks of barley-sugar, which, added to the large quantity of water he had swallowed, might otherwise have proved too much for his digestive powers, and lain too heavily upon his stomach, if he had not also possessed that invaluable aid to digestion which we call self-esteem.

CHAPTER VI.

PITOU AS A GEOGRAPHER.

WHILE Pitou was drinking and digesting and cogitating, Mother Colombe entered the post-office; but this did not trouble him in the least, as he knew that with fifteen of his long strides he could easily overtake her. He took these fifteen long strides, and reached the door of the post-office just as Madame Colombe emerged from it with a letter in her hand, — a carefully folded missive, neatly fastened with a waxen seal, and addressed to Catherine Billot.

Mother Colombe delivered this letter to her munificent customer according to agreement, and Pitou set out forthwith for Pisseleu, half joyful, half sorrowful, — joyful, because he had good news for Catherine; sorrowful, because the source of the young girl's happiness precluded any possibility of success as far as his own suit was concerned.

Despite his disappointment, the messenger was so generous-hearted that, in order to get this confounded letter to Catherine as soon as possible, he unconsciously quickened his pace from a walk into a trot, and from a trot into a gallop.

About fifty yards from the farm-house he paused suddenly, remembering that if he arrived there panting and covered with sweat, Father Billot's suspicions might be aroused; so he resolved to accomplish the rest of the journey in a more dignified manner. As he passed the side of the house where Catherine's window was located, he saw that the nurse had thrown back one side of the window, probably to let fresh air into the apartment.

Glancing into the room as he passed, he saw that Catherine was awake: so, looking around to satisfy himself that no other person was in sight, he tossed the letter in through the opening with such skill that it lighted upon her pillow; then, without waiting for any expression of thanks, he proceeded towards the door of the house, where he found Farmer Billot standing upon the threshold.

But for a projection in the side of the house, the farmer would certainly have seen what had just taken place; and, in his present frame of mind, Heaven only knows what might have happened.

Honest Pitou no sooner found himself thus unexpectedly face to face with the farmer, than he blushed up to his very ears, in spite of himself.

"How you frightened me!" he exclaimed.

"Frightened! you, Pitou, — a captain in the National Guard, one of the takers of the Bastile, frightened!"

"What of that? There are moments when one is not expecting —"

"Yes; especially if a fellow is expecting to meet a girl, and encounters the father, eh?"

"You can hardly say that in this case, as I could have had no expectation of seeing Mademoiselle Catherine."

"Have you any report to make?"

"To whom?"

"To Catherine."

"I am to report that Doctor Raynal will call in the course of the day; but anybody else can tell her that just as well as I can."

"You must be hungry."

"Hungry? I should say not!"

"What! you're not hungry?" cried the farmer, much surprised.

Pitou saw that he had made a terrible blunder. For Pitou not to be hungry at eight o'clock in the morning indicated a decided derangement in the equilibrium of nature.

"Well, yes; I believe I am hungry," said he.

"Go in and eat, then. The hands are at breakfast now; but they've saved a place for you."

Pitou entered the house, and Billot watched him as the young man seated himself at the upper end of the table and attacked the round loaf and dish of bacon; for though Pitou could not do many things at one time, whatever he did, he did well. Intrusted with a commission by Catherine, he executed it well; invited to breakfast by Billot, he breakfasted well.

When he had nearly finished his repast, Catherine's door opened, and Madame Clement entered the kitchen; and as soon as she appeared, Madame Billot hastened to her, and Billot re-entered the house, for both were desirous of inquiring for Catherine.

"She is doing very well now, though she seems a little inclined to become delirious again."

"Delirious again?" repeated the farmer.

"Oh, my poor child!" murmured Mother Billot.

"Yes; she talks about a city she calls Sardinia, and a country named Turin, and she has been begging me to call Monsieur Pitou in to tell her which is the city and which is the country."

"All right!" exclaimed Pitou, swallowing the remaining contents of his mug of cider at a single draught, and wiping his mouth on his sleeve. But a glance at Father Billot checked him, and he added, "That is, if Monsieur Billot thinks it well for me to give mademoiselle the information she wants."

"Why not?" interposed Mother Billot. "If the poor child wants you, go to her, of course. Besides, didn't Doctor Raynal say you were a capital hand in a sick-room?"

"My goodness!" said Pitou, naïvely, "just ask Madame Clement how we had to watch mademoiselle all night. She never slept a wink, any more than I did."

This indicated a vast amount of cunning on Pitou's part;

for, as the nurse had slept from midnight until six o'clock, the audacious assertion that she had not slept a wink converted her into a friend, — yes, more than a friend, an accomplice.

"Very well; if Catherine wants to see you, go to her," replied Father Billot. "Perhaps the time will come when she'll ask for her mother and me."

Pitou felt that there was danger in the air, and, though quite ready to face the storm if absolutely necessary, promptly decided to provide himself with a place of shelter as well.

This shelter was Haramont, where he was king. King! he was more than king, — he was commander of the National Guard; he was Lafayette. Besides, many duties summoned him to Haramont, and he resolved to return there as soon as he had made satisfactory arrangements with Catherine.

When he re-entered the sick-room, he found the patient awaiting him most impatiently. In fact, from the brilliant colour in her cheeks and the fire in her eyes, one might indeed have supposed, like Madame Clement, that the fever had returned again.

"Ah, it is you!" she exclaimed. "I thought you were never coming."

"It was not my fault; your father detained me. I'm afraid he suspects something. Besides, I didn't hurry, as I knew you had what you wanted most," added the honest fellow, with a sigh.

"Yes, Pitou, yes; and I thank you with all my heart. You are very kind, and I do love you ever so much."

"You are very kind yourself, mademoiselle," Pitou answered, almost ready to cry, as he saw how entirely this friendship was the reflection of her love for another; for modest as he was, he could not help feeling humiliated at the idea of playing moon to Isidore's sun, so he added quickly, "I came because they told me you wanted to ask me something."

Catherine placed her hand on her heart. She was feeling for Isidore's letter, as if to gain courage from it; then she exclaimed, "Ah, Pitou, you are so wise! Can you tell me anything about Sardinia?"

Pitou endeavoured to recall all of his limited knowledge of geography. "Wait a minute, wait a minute, mademoiselle. I ought to know. Wait a minute. If I could only remember the first word, I should be all right."

"Try, Pitou; do try," entreated Catherine.

"That is precisely what I am doing. Sardinia—Sardinia. Ah! I have it now. Sardinia, so named by the Romans, is one of the three largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea. It lies south of Corsica, from which it is separated by the Straits of Bonifacio. The capital is Cagliari. There, that is all I know about Sardinia, Mademoiselle Catherine!"

"How grand one must feel to know so much! Now I have heard all there is to hear about Sardinia, tell me something about Turin."

"Turin? Certainly. I'm sure nothing would please me better; that is, if I can remember. Turin—Turin! Oh, yes; Turin, the capital of Piedmont. Yes, I know now. Turin, called by the ancients *Bodincemagus Taurasia* and *Augusta Taurinorum*, and now the capital of Piedmont and of the Sardinian states, situated on the Po and the Dora Ripaira, is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. Population, one hundred and twenty-five thousand; reigning monarch, Charles Emmanuel. There's your Turin, Mademoiselle Catherine."

"But how far is Turin from Pisseleu, Monsieur Pitou?"

"Goodness gracious! I can tell you how far Turin is from Paris; but from Pisseleu, that's quite another matter."

"Well, tell me first how far it is from Paris, and then we can add the eighteen leagues between Paris and Pisseleu."

"That's so," responded Pitou; then, as if going on with a recitation, he continued, "Distance from Paris two hun-

dred and six leagues; from Rome, one hundred and forty; from Constantinople — ”

“I only want to know the distance from Paris. Two hundred and six leagues, plus eighteen leagues, make two hundred and twenty-four leagues. Only three days ago he was here, but half a league from me; now — now — ” she added, bursting into tears, and wringing her hands, “now, he is two hundred and twenty-four leagues from me!”

“No, no, not yet,” Pitou corrected timidly. “He started only day before yesterday, and he is scarcely half-way now.”

“Where is he, do you think?”

“I can’t say, really. Abbé Fortier taught us all about the different countries and their capitals, but he taught us nothing about the roads leading to them.”

“So that is all you know about Turin, Pitou?”

“Yes,” replied the geographer, ashamed of his very limited store of knowledge, “except that Turin is a great place for aristocrats.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I mean that Turin is a place of refuge for all the princes and princesses and fugitives, like D’Artois, Condé, and Madame de Polignac, — a lot of conspirators against the nation, who will have their heads chopped off by Monsieur Guillotin’s new machine some day, I hope.”

“Oh, Monsieur Pitou! how can you be so cruel!”

“Cruel? Me? Yes, yes, I see; Monsieur Isidore is one of the aristocrats, and you’re alarmed on his account.”

Then, with one of those ponderous sighs we have mentioned more than once, he said, “Don’t let us talk any more about that. Let us talk of yourself, Mademoiselle Catherine, and of how I can be most useful to you.”

“My dear Pitou, the letter I received this morning is probably not the only one I shall receive.”

“And you want me to get the others for you, just as I did this one?”

“Yes. My father, you see, will watch me so closely

that I sha'n't be able to go to the village at all, I'm afraid."

"But he is watching me, too, I can tell you; I see it in his eye."

"Yes; but he can't follow you to Haramont, Pitou, and we can agree upon some safe hiding-place for the letters."

"Yes; such as the hollow in the big willow-tree, near the place where I found you in that swoon, for example."

"Exactly; that is just on the edge of the farm, yet out of sight from the windows. So it is understood that the letters shall be placed there?"

"Yes; but how will you manage to go after the letters?"

"Why, you see I shall try to get well quickly now," replied Catherine, with a smile full of hope and determination.

Poor Pitou heaved the heaviest of sighs.

Just then the door opened, and Doctor Raynal appeared.

CHAPTER VII.

PITOU AS A CAPTAIN.

DOCTOR RAYNAL's visit occurred just in time to facilitate Pitou's departure.

When the physician approached his patient, he perceived the change which had taken place in her condition since the evening before, at a glance. Catherine smiled upon him and held out her wrist.

"If it were not for the pleasure of touching your pretty hand, I should n't take your pulse, my dear Catherine," said the doctor; "for I'm sure it is n't beating at the rate of more than seventy-five a minute."

"I'm certainly very much better, doctor. Your medicine has worked wonders."

"My medicine! *Hum-m-m!* Of course, my child, I am very willing to take all the credit of your quick recovery to myself; but, vain as I am, I must give part of the credit to my assistant, Pitou."

Then, glancing heavenward, he added, "Oh, Nature, mysterious Isis, what wonderful secrets thou hidest, even from those who know how to question thee!" Then, turning to the door, he called out, "Come in, now, you gloomy-faced father and anxious-eyed mother; come in and see your dear invalid! She needs only your love and caresses to complete her recovery now."

Father and Mother Billot instantly obeyed the doctor's summons, — the father with some remnant of suspicion still on his face; the mother's countenance all radiant with joy.

As they stepped into the room, Pitou slipped out, after responding to Catherine's farewell glance with a knowing wink.

Let us leave our pretty invalid now to regain health and hope under the caresses of her parents, and follow the worthy youth who had just performed so unobtrusively and unconsciously one of the most difficult tasks Christianity imposes upon its followers; namely, forgetfulness of self, united with devotion to one's neighbour.

Though he did not stop to think of the greatness of his deed, he did feel, through the commendations of that inward voice in every human breast, that he had done a good and noble thing from a human, though perhaps not from a moral, standpoint. Humanity was one of the most popular words of the day; and Pitou, who had often uttered it without knowing precisely what it implied, now put his humanity into practice, without really knowing what he had done.

Instead of being Isidore de Charny's rival, he had now become Catherine's confidant; so, instead of repulsing him roughly, as she had done on his return from his first visit to Paris, she petted him, and treated him with tender familiarity. As her confidant, he had attained a place in her regard to which he could never have aspired as Isidore's rival; and, in order to insure a continuance of these friendly relations, Pitou took to Mother Colombe an almost illegible note given him by Catherine, authorising him to call for any letters which might come addressed to her. To this written order Pitou added Catherine's verbal promise that she would give all the Pisseleu labourers a treat of gingerbread and candy on Saint Martin's day; and, thanks to this order and promise, Mother Colombe agreed to hold any letters which might come for Catherine until Pitou called for them.

This matter settled, Pitou wended his way homeward.

The gallant captain's return to Haramont was a public event. His hasty departure for Paris had given rise to all

sorts of conflicting rumours; for ever since the arrival of an order from one of Lafayette's aides for the seizure of sundry guns at Abbé Fortier's, the inhabitants of the village had entertained no doubts whatever of Pitou's political importance.

Some persons declared that he had been summoned to Paris by Doctor Gilbert; others, that Lafayette had sent for him; and some few even declared that he had been sent for by the king himself.

Though Pitou was ignorant of these rumours concerning his personal importance, he unquestionably set his foot upon his native heath with an air of dignity that made a deep impression upon everybody.

He had scarcely reached home before the drummer called to see him; and he ordered the lad to announce a dress-parade on the village square the following Sunday.

That same evening he called on Master Dulauroy, the tailor, to ascertain if he would undertake the job of providing the Haramont National Guards with uniforms, and at what price. The tailor, after prolonged arithmetical calculations of the length and breadth represented by the thirty-three men, including officers, subalterns, and privates, that composed this formidable body of troops, declared that he could not furnish thirty-three coats and thirty-three pairs of trousers for less than thirty-three louis; and, even then, Pitou must not expect entirely new cloth.

Pitou protested, declaring that he had it from Lafayette's own lips that he had clothed the civic guard of France at the rate of twenty-five francs per man, or seventy-five millions for the entire number.

Master Dulauroy replied that, in such a large contract, small losses might be retrieved in the grand total; but the very best he could do — if he were to hang for it — was to uniform the Haramont Guards for twenty-two francs a man: and, even then, a cash payment must be made in advance, as he could not undertake such a large contract on credit.

Pitou carelessly pulled a handful of gold from his pocket, and remarked that there was no trouble about a cash settlement, though he was limited as regards price; and if Master Dulauroy would not furnish the thirty-three uniforms for twenty-five golden louis, the captain would be obliged to apply to Master Bligny, — Dulauroy's rival in business, — though he had given him — Dulauroy — the preference, on account of his being a personal friend of Pitou's aunt; for Pitou was not sorry to have Aunt Angelica hear in this roundabout way that he had his pockets full of gold.

The threat of taking such a colossal order elsewhere had the desired effect; and Master Dulauroy consented to the proposed terms, and even acceded to Pitou's demand that the captain's suit should be made of new cloth, and adorned with epaulets without extra charge.

In case of a failure to deliver the goods punctually, the tailor would be held personally responsible for causing the postponement of the ceremony of the public confederation of Villers-Cotterets and several neighbouring villages, which was to take place one week from the following day. The next morning, after parade, Pitou summoned Lieutenant Désiré Maniquet and Sergeant Claude Tellier, and requested them to invite their men, in behalf of himself, Doctor Gilbert, General Lafayette, and the king, to call upon Master Dulauroy, the tailor of Villers-Cotterets, who had an important communication to make to them.

Five minutes later the thirty-one privates of the Haramont National Guard, together with Sergeant Tellier and Lieutenant Désiré Maniquet, were hastening along the road to Villers-Cotterets.

That night the Haramont National Guard gave their captain a serenade. The air was alive with Roman candles, pin-wheels, and powder crackers, and several voices — slightly inebriated voices, to be sure — shouted vociferously, at intervals, "Long live Ange Pitou, the Father of the People!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH ABBÉ FORTIER GIVES FRESH PROOF OF HIS ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT.

THE following Sunday the inhabitants of Villers-Cotterets were awakened by the drummer vigorously beating his call to arms at five o'clock in the morning. The ceremonies were not to begin until ten; but five hours would hardly suffice for the completion of what still remained to be done.

A large platform had been erected in the middle of the square. This structure was intended to serve as one of those much-talked-of Patriot Altars, and Abbé Fortier had been invited to come and celebrate mass there on Sunday, October 18th, instead of in his own church.

To make this stage worthy of its exalted purpose, it was necessary to solicit donations from the well-to-do persons in the community: and it must be admitted that every one had responded most generously, — one person contributing a carpet, another an altar-cloth, a third proffering silk hangings, and the fourth a sacred picture; but, as the weather was very variable at that season of the year, no one liked to risk his contribution before the appointed time. But the brightness and warmth of the sun when it rose on the eventful morning indicated one of those beautiful autumn days which rival the balmiest days of spring; and by nine o'clock the altar was bedecked with a superb Aubusson carpet, a lace-trimmed cloth, and a picture representing John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness. It was surmounted, too, by a velvet canopy fringed with gold, from which hung handsome brocade curtains.

All the young girls of the neighbourhood, dressed in white, wearing tricoloured sashes, and carrying green

boughs in their hands, were to be grouped around the altar; and after mass the men were to take the oath of allegiance to the constitution.

The Villers-Cotterets National Guards, under arms since eight o'clock, awaited the coming of similar organisations from the surrounding villages; and it is needless to say that, of all the companies expected, the one awaited most impatiently was the Haramont Guards, — it having been noised abroad that, thanks to Pitou's influence and the king's bounty, the thirty-three men composing it would be in uniform.

Master Dulauroy's shop had been thronged all the week with inquisitive visitors, eager to watch the ten workmen engaged upon this gigantic order, unparalleled in Villers-Cotterets within the memory of man.

The last uniform, that of the captain, — for Pitou had insisted that his men should be served first, — the last uniform had been delivered, according to contract, at exactly fifty-nine minutes past eleven o'clock Saturday night, and Pitou had paid Master Dulauroy his twenty-five louis then and there.

At nine o'clock precisely the sound of a fife and drum was heard, accompanied with shouts of delight and admiration; and in the distance Pitou could be seen, mounted upon his white horse, or rather the white horse belonging to his lieutenant, Désiré Maniquet.

Aunt Angelica hardly recognised her nephew in this martial guise, and narrowly escaped being trampled by the white horse while she was endeavouring to inspect Pitou from under that animal's very nose.

Pitou made a majestic salute with his sword, and, in tones loud enough to be heard for twenty rods around, called out, "Good-day, Madame Angelica!"

Completely crushed by this formal greeting, the antiquated maiden staggered back, and, lifting her eyes heavenward, exclaimed, —

"Unfortunate boy! his honours have turned his head. He no longer knows his own aunt!"

Pitou passed majestically along to the foot of the altar,—the place of honour having been assigned to the Haramont Guards. There he dismounted, and intrusted his steed to the care of an urchin, to whom he gave the munificent sum of six sous; which fact being immediately reported to Aunt Angelica, that lady muttered, "Simpleton! does he fancy himself a millionaire?" But after a moment's reflection she added, in milder tones: "I made a mistake, I do believe, when I quarrelled with him. Aunts may inherit property from nephews."

But neither of these remarks reached the ears of Pitou, who was simply in ecstasy; for among the girls adorned with tricoloured ribbons, and carrying green branches, he saw Catherine. She was still very pale, for she had hardly recovered from her illness; but she was more beautiful in her pallor than any other girl in the ruddiest health. She was pale, but happy; for that very morning, thanks to Pitou, she had found a letter in the willow-tree.

Suddenly a great hubbub was heard in the direction of the Rue Soissons, and the cause of this tumult, as well as the threatening tones that were distinctly audible, was this: Everybody knew that Abbé Fortier had been requested to celebrate mass at this patriot altar, and that the sacred vessels and other accessories were to be brought from the church for that purpose.

Monsieur de Longpré, the mayor of Villers-Cotterets, was not on very friendly terms with Abbé Fortier, having had quite a heated controversy with him on the occasion of the forcible seizure of the arms concealed in the abbé's house; so, knowing that gentleman's obstinate and irascible temperament, he had contented himself with merely sending him the following notice, taken from the official programme for the ceremonial:—

"Mass will be celebrated at the Patriot Altar by Abbé Fortier, beginning at ten o'clock in the morning.

"The sacred vessels and other articles needed for the service will be transported from the church to the Patriot Altar under the supervision of Abbé Fortier."

By nine o'clock the Patriot Altar, as we have previously remarked, was decked out with its carpet, curtains, and linen, and its picture of John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness; only the candles, crucifix, the tabernacle containing the consecrated wafer, and such other vessels as are needed in the celebration of the mass were lacking. At half-past nine these articles had not appeared; the mayor, scenting trouble in the air, despatched his secretary to the priest's house. The messenger soon returned with the intelligence that the priest had been seized with a severe attack of gout; that the beadle had sprained his foot; that the two choristers were quite ill; and that the church doors were locked and barred.

An ominous murmur began to rise from the populace, and there was even talk of battering down the church doors to secure possession of the sacred vessels, and of dragging the priest by force to the altar. But the mayor, being of a peaceable disposition, protested against any resort to violence, and offered to go in person to treat with the abbé.

He accordingly hastened to the Rue Soissons, but found the priest's door as securely bolted as the doors of the church. Having no battering-ram or catapult at hand to force the door, a locksmith was sent for; but, as he was about to begin operations, the door opened, and Fortier appeared upon the threshold.

"Back, renegades!" he shouted; "back, ye Amalekites and Sodomites! Do not set your impious feet upon the threshold of God's servant!"

"Pardon me," interposed the mayor, in his most conciliatory manner, — "pardon me; we only came to inquire whether you will or will not celebrate mass upon our country's altar."

"Celebrate mass at that altar!" shouted the priest, relapsing into one of those fits of holy wrath to which he was so prone. "Do you expect me to sanction revolt, rebellion, and ingratitude; to ask God to curse virtue and

bless crime? Scarcely, Monsieur le Maire. You wish to know whether I will celebrate your sacrilegious mass or not. Very well, then; no, *no*, no, I will *not*!"

"Very well; you are a free citizen, Monsieur Abbé, and no one can compel you to do it against your will."

"It is very fortunate for me that I am, and that there is no way of compelling me to do it, as you say. You are very kind, really too kind, Monsieur le Maire;" and, with a most insolent sneer, he began to close the door in the very faces of the authorities.

But just at that moment a man darted out from the crowd, and, with one violent blow, dashed open the door, almost overturning the priest, so vigorous was the attack.

The man was Billot.

A profound silence followed. Every one felt that a terrible scene was about to ensue between the two men; but, though he was obliged to exert all his strength to hold the door open, it was in a perfectly calm, almost gentle, voice that he asked, turning to the mayor, —

"Pardon me, but what did you say, Monsieur le Maire? Did you say that if the abbé here was unwilling to perform the duties of his office, he could not be compelled to do it?"

"Yes," stammered Monsieur Longpré; "yes, I did say something to that effect, I believe."

"Then you made a great mistake, Monsieur le Maire; and a mistake it is not well to make too often in times like these."

"Back, sacrilegious monster! Back, impious man! Back, renegade! Back, heretic!" cried the abbé.

"Hold your tongue, or it will be the worse for you!" responded Billot. "I am not disposed to insult you; I merely wish to discuss the matter. The mayor here seems to think you cannot be compelled to say mass. I claim that you can, and I can prove it. I say that any man who receives a salary is obliged to perform the work for which this salary is paid. For instance, here is the mayor's

secretary; his honour sends him to you with the programme for these ceremonies. Very well; it would never enter his brain to tell the mayor he would rather not take this programme to Monsieur Fortier, would it?"

"No, Monsieur Billot; no, of course not," responded the secretary, naively.

"And here is our friend the chief of police," continued Billot; "when his honour the mayor sent for him just now, do you suppose that official even so much as thought of replying, 'Maintain order if you like, but you must maintain it without any help of mine!' Did you make any such answer as that, Mr. Chief of Police?"

"Of course not. It was my duty to come, and I came," replied that functionary, promptly.

"Do you hear that, Monsieur Abbé?" inquired Billot. "Very well, then; how does it happen that you, who are expected to set a good example, should alone consider yourself exempt from duty? And you not only do that, but set us an example of disorder and wrongdoing as well."

"Oh! but the Church is independent," responded the priest, seeing that some defence was absolutely necessary; "the Church obeys nobody, and is accountable only to herself."

"That's the mischief of it," responded Billot. "You set up another power in the country; you are either a citizen or not a citizen, a Frenchman or a foreigner. If you get your pay from Pitt of England, from Cobourg or Kaunitz, obey Pitt or Cobourg or Kaunitz, as the case may be; but if you are a Frenchman, if you are a citizen of France, if it is the nation that pays you,—why, obey the nation."

"Yes, yes!" cried three hundred voices approvingly.

"So, in the name of the nation, priest," continued Billot, placing a powerful hand on the abbé's shoulder, — "so, in the name of the nation, I call upon you to fulfil your mission of peace, and ask that the blessing of Heaven, the bounty of Providence, and the mercy of Christ the

Lord may descend upon your fellow citizens and your country. Come, come, I say!"

"Bravo, Billot, bravo!" resounded from every side. "To the altar with the priest! To the altar with him!"

Encouraged by these shouts of approval, the farmer dragged the priest from the shelter of his doorway, — this man who was probably the first priest in all France to openly give the signal for a counter-revolution.

The abbé saw that resistance was an impossibility.

"Ah, well, martyrdom, then!" he exclaimed. "I ask for martyrdom; I desire martyrdom; I demand martyrdom!"

Then, in a full, resonant voice, he intoned the *Libera nos, Domine*.

It was this strange procession which was noisily approaching the public square a few moments after Pitou had proudly stationed himself with his men near the Patriot Altar.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

PITOU, almost believing that he was about to be called upon to defend some new Foulon or Berthier, shouted, "To arms!" and placed himself at the head of his men; but, as the crowd divided, he saw Abbé Fortier approaching, dragged along by Billot, and lacking only a palm-branch to make him look like one of the Christian martyrs forced into the arena in ancient times; and it was only natural that Pitou should rush to the defence of his former teacher, of whose offence he was as yet ignorant.

"Oh, Monsieur Billot!" he exclaimed, throwing himself in front of the farmer.

"Oh, father!" cried Catherine, with a movement so exactly like Pitou's that one might have supposed they had been trained by the same stage manager.

But it required a glance only from Billot to check both of them; for there was something alike of the lion and the eagle in this man, who seemed the very incarnation of the national uprising.

On reaching the foot of the altar he let go his hold upon the priest of his own accord, and, pointing to the platform, said: "There is the altar of thy country, at which thou hast refused to officiate, but which I now declare thee unworthy to approach. To ascend these sacred steps, the heart should be filled with a love of liberty, devotion to country, and love of humanity. Priest, dost thou desire the enfranchisement of the world? Priest, art thou devoted to thy country? Priest, lovest thou thy neighbour? If thou dost, then ascend the steps of the altar, and implore

the blessing of God upon our cause; if not, yield thy place to one more worthy, and get thee hence!"

"Wretch!" exclaimed the priest, shaking his fist threateningly at Billot; "thou knowest not upon whom thou hast declared war!"

"But I do know!" retorted Billot. "It is against wolves, and foxes, and serpents, — against whatsoever bites, and stings, and stabs in the dark! Well," smiting his broad breast with both his powerful hands as he spoke, "stab, sting, bite! Here I am!"

A breathless silence followed; for all were spell-bound with admiration and awe at Billot's audacity in thus offering himself as a target for the shafts of that dread power, which, at that epoch, still held more than half the world in its thrall, — the Church.

There was no longer any such thing as a mayor, or assistant mayor, or municipal officers; there was no one but Billot.

Monsieur de Longpré approached.

"But what are we to do, — we have no priest?" he remarked; for Abbé Fortier had walked away, — the crowd dividing in silence to let him pass, and then closing in again.

"And what of that?"

"Having no priest, we can have no mass."

"I will tell you what we will have in place of the mass!" cried Billot, like one truly inspired. "Ascend to the altar of your country with me, Monsieur le Maire, and you, too, Pitou, — one on my right hand, the other on my left. And now, what we will have in place of the mass — give ear, each one of you — is the Declaration of Human Rights, the Creed of Liberty, the Gospel of the Future."

There was an enthusiastic clapping of hands; for these people, only just released from bondage, were more eager for a knowledge of the rights they were to enjoy than for that which Fortier called the Heavenly Word.

Standing between the representatives of civic and mili-

tary power, Billot, extending his hand, repeated from memory — for it will be remembered that the worthy farmer did not know how to read — the following lines:

“DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

“1. Men are born and should remain free and with equal rights.

“2. The object of all political associations should be the preservation of the natural and inalienable rights of the man and citizen. These rights are: liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.”

The words “resistance to oppression” were uttered as by a man who had seen the walls of the Bastille totter and fall, and who knew that no one can resist the power of the people when they choose to exert it.

“3. The principle of sovereignty resides in the nation. No legislative body or individual can rightfully exercise authority that does not emanate directly from the nation.

“4. Liberty consists in the power to do anything that is not injurious to others.

“5. The law has the right to forbid only such actions as are detrimental to society. Anything not forbidden by law cannot be prevented; and no one can be compelled to do what the law does not ordain he shall do.

“6. Law is the expression of the popular will.”

Then, pausing, and lifting his finger impressively, he continued, “Listen to this, fellow-citizens; listen attentively:

“All citizens have a right to concur personally, or through their representatives, in the formation of the law, which should be the same for all, whether it protects or whether it punishes. All citizens, being equal before the law, are equally admissible to all dignities and public offices, according their to individual capacity, and with no other distinctions than those arising from their talents and virtues.

“7. No man can be arrested or imprisoned, except in cases defined by law, and in accordance with such formalities as it prescribes. All persons who incite or execute unlawful commands, or cause them to

be executed, shall be punished; but every citizen summoned or arrested in the name of the law must instantly obey the summons.

"8. The law should establish only such penalties as are strictly and manifestly necessary, and no one should be punished except in accordance with a law established and promulgated prior to the offence.

"9. Every man being supposed to be innocent until he has been found guilty, all severity not absolutely necessary for the safe custody of his person shall be strictly forbidden by law.

"10. No man shall be molested on account of his opinions, even in religion, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

"11. The free expression of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Each and every citizen may consequently speak, write, and print freely, though he should be held accountable for any abuse of this right in cases determined by law.

"12. The protection of the rights of men and citizens necessitates a public force; but this force is instituted for the benefit of all, and not for the aggrandisement of a favoured few.

"13. For the maintenance of public authority and the defrayal of the expenses of the government a general tax is indispensable; but it should be levied equally upon all citizens, in proportion to their means.

"14. The public has a right to exact of every public official an account of his stewardship.

"15. Property being an inviolable and sacred right, no one can be deprived of it unless public necessity absolutely demands it, and then only on condition of a just and prearranged indemnity.

"And now," continued Billot, "we come to the application of these principles as adopted by the National Assembly. Hearken to it, my brethren! hearken, fellow-citizens, set free by this Declaration of the Rights of Man — of your rights!

"The National Assembly, desiring to establish the French Constitution upon the principles set forth in this declaration, abolishes irrevocably all institutions injurious to liberty and equality.

"Consequently, henceforth there shall be neither nobility nor peerage, neither hereditary distinctions nor distinctions of rank, nor any

Reading the Articles of the Convention.

Photogravure by Goupil et Cie., from Drawing by
H. Pille.



Dessiné par H. Pille.

Photogravure Goupil & C^{ie}

of the titles, attributes, or prerogatives derived therefrom; no orders of knighthood, nor any decorations which presuppose distinctions of birth, nor any superiority except that belonging to public officials in the discharge of their duties.

“No public office shall be saleable or hereditary. There shall be no restrictive guilds, no professional corporations, no monopolies of the arts or trades.”

Thus ended Billot's address, which had been listened to in devout silence. For the first time the people heard their rights proclaimed in the full light of day, and, as it were, in the presence of the God to whom they had long prayed for these rights, gained only after cycles of bondage, misery, and suffering.

As Billot stopped speaking, he extended his arms and clasped the mayor and Pitou to his breast in a fraternal embrace; and though the mayor ruled only a small community, and Pitou commanded only a handful of peasants, despite the insignificance of the things represented, the principle was none the less grand, and every person enthusiastically repeated Billot's concluding words, — “Long live the nation!” — generously dividing his honours with the mayor and Pitou.

It is needless to say that the gallant captain of the Haramont National Guards managed to give his hand to Catherine in the dance, and to secure a place near her at the table.

The poor child was very unhappy. In his controversy with Fortier, and his speech on the Declaration of the Rights of Man, her father had openly defied both the clergy and nobility. She thought of Isidore, who, according to her father's new theories, was no longer superior socially to any other man.

It was not the loss of his title, rank, or wealth she regretted, — for she would have loved Isidore as a humble peasant, — but it seemed to her that the world was unjust, even brutal, to that young man, and that her father, by wresting Isidore's titles and privileges from him, was

separating her lover from her for ever, instead of bringing them nearer together.

As for the mass, no one seemed inclined to say anything more about it. In fact, the people had almost forgiven the priest's outburst; though, by his almost empty classroom the next day, he perceived that his refusal to officiate at the Patriot Altar had cost him his popularity among the residents of Villers-Cotterets.

CHAPTER X.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

CELEBRATIONS similar to that which we have just described were universal throughout France; but they formed only the prelude to a much grander gathering, which was to take place in Paris on the 14th of July, 1790; and the prominent parts Billot and Pitou had so successfully sustained at this local celebration very naturally led to their appointment as delegates to the Paris celebration.

After his short-lived military triumph, Pitou relapsed into his normal condition of mild and kindly melancholy. He visited Mother Colombe daily, and if there was no letter for Catherine, he slowly wended his way back to Haramont. If there was a letter, he carefully deposited it in the willow-tree. But though Pitou was dumb, he was not blind; for one fine morning he noticed that the post-mark on the letter was Lyons instead of Turin, and a couple of days later — or, to speak more accurately, on December 25th — a letter came bearing the post-mark Paris, instead of Lyons; so it was easy to comprehend that Isidore de Charny had returned to France, and that it was not likely to be very long before he quitted Paris for Boursonnes.

The day this last letter came he resolved, by way of excuse, to go and set his snares on Wolf Heath, where he had operated so successfully in former years. As the Pisseleu farm was situated on the road between Haramont and Wolf Heath, Pitou could stop at the farm-house on his way; and he very naturally chose for his visit an hour when Billot was likely to be riding about the fields.

When he reached the gate, he saw Catherine sitting at her window, apparently watching for some one. When she saw him she smiled; and, as he approached the window, she called out, —

“So it is you, Pitou! What lucky wind blew you in this direction?”

Pitou showed her the snares wrapped round his wrist.

“I thought I’d see if I couldn’t catch a couple of nice tender rabbits for you, Mademoiselle Catherine; and the very nicest ones in the neighbourhood are to be found on Wolf Heath, by reason of the wild thyme that grows there.”

“You are very kind, Pitou, I am sure; but you needn’t take all that trouble on my account. I am nearly well, now. And, Pitou,” she added in a lower tone, “it won’t be necessary for you to go to the post-office for me any more this week; I shall not receive any more letters for several days.”

Because Isidore had returned to Paris was no reason that he should not write; so Pitou instantly came to the conclusion that the letter he had placed in the hollow tree early that very morning had announced to Catherine her lover’s speedy return. Possibly she was watching for him even now.

Pitou waited a moment for Catherine to decide whether she had any further disclosures to make to him; but, as she maintained a determined silence, he asked, —

“Have you not noticed a great change in your father of late, mademoiselle?”

The girl trembled, and answered his question by another: “Why, have you, too, noticed a change in him?”

“Mademoiselle Catherine,” Pitou replied, shaking his head gloomily, “the hour will surely come when the man who has caused this change will have a hard time settling with your father.”

Catherine turned pale; nevertheless, she looked sharply at Pitou as she asked, “Why do you say *he*, rather than

she? It is a woman, perhaps, not a man, who will have to suffer from my father's wrath."

"You frighten me, mademoiselle! Have you any cause for fear?"

"I have to fear what any girl who has forgotten her rank, and loves above her station, has to fear from an angry parent," answered the girl, ruefully.

"It seems to me, if I were in your place, mademoiselle —"

He paused.

"Well?" insisted Catherine.

"It seems to me, if I were in your place — But no — you nearly died when he went away. If you had to give him up altogether, it would kill you — I suppose —"

"Hush! let us talk of something else," exclaimed Catherine, hastily. "Here comes father now."

Pitou glanced in the direction in which Catherine was looking, and saw the farmer approaching on horseback at a brisk trot.

Perceiving a man standing near Catherine's window, the farmer stopped; then, recognising Pitou, he was about to jog on again; but seeing his favourite advance smilingly towards him, hat in hand, he called out, —

"How are you, Pitou? Did you come for your dinner?"

"No, Monsieur Billot; I should n't think of taking such a liberty as that —"

But, fancying he discerned a pleading look on Catherine's face, he added, —

"Though I think I should accept if you invited me."

"Well, I do invite you, then, here and now."

"And I accept," responded Pitou, promptly.

The farmer touched his horse with the spur, and rode on to the stable.

"Was n't that what you wanted me to say?" Pitou asked, turning to Catherine.

"Yes."

Then, after a moment's pause, "Father looks even more gloomy to-day than usual, it seems to me."

And again, under her breath, and as if talking to herself, she added, "My God! can it be that he suspects?"

"Suspects what, mademoiselle?" asked Pitou, who had overheard her, though she spoke so low.

"Nothing," she replied, withdrawing her head and closing the window.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH FATHER CLOUIS REAPPEARS UPON THE SCENE.

AND Catherine was quite right; for, in spite of the cordial reception accorded to Pitou, the farmer did appear even more morose than usual.

"Is dinner ready?" he asked curtly, as soon as he had entered the house.

"Yes, father," answered his wife, who had risen as usual as soon as her husband crossed the threshold, both from a feeling of inferiority on her part, and from a desire to manifest the respect she felt for him.

"Then let us sit down to it at once, for I have still a good deal to do before night."

An additional plate was put on for Pitou; but they had scarcely seated themselves at the table when a knock was heard at the door, and Father Clouis entered, with Farmer Billot's double-barrelled gun on his shoulder, and a hare in his hand. The farmer's gun could be easily distinguished from others by its silver mountings.

"Good-day, Father Clouis," said Billot. "You're a man of your word, I see. Thank you."

"Oh, when I say a thing I mean it. When I meet you, and you say to me, as you did this morning, 'I want you to cast a dozen bullets for me, the right calibre for my gun; I must have them this afternoon,' and I say, 'That's all right; you shall have 'em,' why, they're as good as made."

"Thanks, Father Clouis; you'll dine with us, won't you?"

"You're very kind; but really, I don't feel at all hungry. Still, if you insist upon it—"

As he spoke, he placed the gun in one corner of the room, and seated himself at the table, where he attacked the plate and glass his host had filled for him as valiantly as if he had not declared himself entirely free from hunger.

"Very good wine, Monsieur Billot, and very nice lamb," he said, as if merely evincing a proper regard for the truth. "You believe in the proverb that says, 'Lambs should be eaten too young, and wine be taken too old.'"

As no one responded to this pleasantry, and the conversation seemed likely to flag, Clouis felt it his duty as a guest to sustain it; so he continued, "I happened to remember, awhile ago, that it was hare day [it will be remembered that Father Clouis had received permission from his grace the Duke of Orleans to kill one rabbit and one hare on alternate days, and this, it seems, was hare day], so I thought, as I had cast thirteen bullets instead of a dozen, I would see how a silver-mounted gun would carry a ball; and I must say it carries a ball well, that gun of yours; but—"

"Yes, it's a good gun."

"Twelve balls, did you say?" exclaimed Pitou. "Is there going to be a shooting-match, Monsieur Billot?"

"No," responded the farmer, shortly.

"I was going to say, though, that if you intend those bullets for boar-shooting, they're rather small," continued Father Clouis; "for those fellows have pretty tough hides, to say nothing of the quantity of lead they'll carry away with them. I've seen boars who had six or eight bullets between their hide and flesh, — big sixteen-to-the-pound bullets, too, — and they seemed none the worse for it."

"These bullets are not for boar-shooting," said Billot.

Pitou's curiosity could not be repressed, however.

"Pardon me, Monsieur Billot," said he, "but if you don't want the bullets for prize-shooting or for boars, what do you want them for?"

"For a wolf," answered Billot, grimly.

"Why, are there any wolves about now? That is strange, — before the snow flies."

"It is surprising, but true, nevertheless."

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly sure. The shepherd saw one this morning."

"Where?"

"On the road from Paris to Boursonnes."

"Ah!" gasped Pitou, with a frightened glance, first at the farmer and then at his daughter.

"Yes," replied Billot, grimly; "one was seen last winter, and I was duly notified. After a while it was supposed that he had gone away, never to return; but it seems that he has come back, and as he may take it into his head to come prowling about my farm, I've had Father Clouis put my gun in order, and cast me some bullets."

This was more than Catherine could bear. With a smothered cry she rose and tottered towards the door. Bewildered and anxious, Pitou also arose, and hastily followed the girl into the adjoining kitchen.

"What does this mean? My God! what does all this mean?" he exclaimed.

"Oh! don't you understand?" cried Catherine. "He knows that Isidore reached Boursonnes this morning, and means to kill him if he comes near the farm."

Just then the dining-room door opened, and Billot appeared upon the threshold.

"Pitou," he said, in a voice that admitted of no reply, "if you really came for rabbits, I think it is quite time you set your snares. It will soon be too late for you to see."

"I am going — going at once, Monsieur Billot," the young man responded humbly.

He went out by the door leading into the courtyard, and Catherine retired weeping to her chamber, bolting the door behind her.

CHAPTER XII.

A GAME OF TAG.

PITOU had learned all he wished to know, and more. Catherine's last words had fully explained her father's figures of speech, and the situation was extremely critical, to say the least. But in a case of emergency Pitou seemed to become endowed with the strength of a lion, as well as the wisdom of a serpent, and he very promptly made up his mind to seek a place of observation on the edge of the forest, from which he could secure an unobstructed view of Farmer Billot's house and its immediate surroundings.

This proving a comparatively easy matter, he next proceeded to consider the situation more deliberately. Much as he desired to do so, he began to wonder if there was the slightest possibility of preventing Father Billot from carrying his scheme of vengeance into execution. The first means of prevention that occurred to Pitou was to run to Boursonnes and warn Monsieur Isidore of the danger that awaited him if he ventured near the farm-house; but almost simultaneously Pitou bethought himself of two things: first, that Catherine had not commissioned him to interfere; and, secondly, that there was a strong probability that he would not be able to find the young viscount, who would be much more likely to approach the farm by one of the paths used by the wood-cutters and foresters than by a more frequented road.

Besides, if he went to warn Isidore, he would have to desert Catherine; and though Pitou would feel sorry to have any misfortune happen to the viscount, he would be in despair if any harm befell Catherine: so it seemed

wisest to remain where he was, and be guided by circumstances in his subsequent procedures.

So he waited, and watched the farm-house, — his eyes as steadfast as those of a wildcat watching for its prey.

The first thing he noticed was the departure of Father Clouis. He left about twilight; and soon afterwards Pitou saw a light appear in the window of Farmer Billot's chamber. From his post of observation Pitou could see Billot load his gun, then extinguish his light and close both shutters; but in such a way as to leave a slight opening, through which the occupant of the room could watch what was going on outside.

Billot's window did not command a view of Catherine's, on account of a projection in the side of the house; but it did command a view, not only of the entire road from Boursonnes, but also of the line of forest extending from the hill to the copse; so, though Billot could not see Catherine's window, he could not fail to see her if she left her room by the window and tried to reach the wood, — and he did not doubt that she would attempt this as soon as it became dark, in order to warn Isidore of his danger.

Pitou, being of the same opinion, directed his attention chiefly to Catherine's casement, though he took good care not to lose sight of the father's.

The men were right; for night had scarcely set in before Pitou, who, by reason of his forest training, could see almost as well in the dark as in the light, saw half of the window turn slowly upon its hinges, and the girl climb out and then close the window after her. There was no danger of Catherine's being seen as long as she followed the line of buildings and fences; but as soon as she directed her course towards Boursonnes, she would come within the radius of her father's vision; and it would be all the more easy for him to see her from the fact that the field which she would be obliged to cross in order to reach the wood was deserted.

In a few seconds Pitou saw the girl emerge from the

shadow of the fence, and, bending over so as to conceal herself from view as much as possible, cross the road and enter a narrow footpath which led by a short cut through the forest to the Boursonnes road, intersecting it at a place known as the Borough Spring, about half a mile farther on.

Catherine had scarcely crossed the field and reached the woods before Pitou saw the shutters of the farmer's window close entirely. A few seconds afterwards the house-door opened, and the farmer came out, with his gun upon his shoulder, and strode down the Boursonnes road in the direction of the spot where the path taken by Catherine would intersect it.

There was no time to lose, for in ten minutes the girl would find herself face to face with her father.

Pitou sprang up, and, bounding through the forest like a frightened deer, soon reached the edge of the path, and, hiding himself behind the trunk of an old oak-tree, awaited Catherine's approach.

In less than two minutes Catherine passed within a few yards of the tree; and Pitou, hastily emerging from his hiding-place, called her by name.

She was so startled that she uttered a sharp cry and paused, trembling in every limb; but she had evidently recognised the voice, for she exclaimed almost instantly, "You, Monsieur Pitou, here? What do you want with me?"

"Not a step farther, for Heaven's sake, my dear mademoiselle!" Pitou exclaimed, clasping his hands beseechingly.

"And why?"

"Because your father knows you have left the house, and he has started down the Boursonnes road with his gun. You will find him waiting for you at the spring."

"But *he!* HE!" cried Catherine, wildly, — "must he not be warned?" And she started on, as if resolved to continue her journey at all hazards.

"Your going will do no good, as your father will be sure to stop you."

"What am I to do, then? Tell me!"

"Return; return to your room at once! I will hide near the house, and when I see Monsieur Isidore coming, I will warn him."

"Will you do that, my dear Monsieur Pitou?"

"I would do anything for you, Mademoiselle Catherine. Ah! how much I love you!"

Catherine pressed his hand gratefully, and, after reflecting a moment, said, —

"Yes, you are right; take me home."

As her strength seemed about to fail her, she passed her arm through that of Pitou, who supported her as she half walked, half ran, back to the house.

In ten minutes she was safe in her room again, and Pitou hastened to the clump of willows in which he intended to watch and wait.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WATCH FOR THE WOLF.

THESE willows, which stood on a slight elevation about twenty-five yards from Catherine's window, overhung a small stream which flowed along about seven or eight feet below, and which was shaded here and there by similar willows, which looked, especially at night, like dwarfs with small bodies and big heads covered with bristling tangled hair.

It was in the last of this row of trees, hollowed by time, that Pitou had secreted Catherine's letters morning after morning, and where Catherine had gone in search of them as soon as her father left the house. They both, however, had exercised so much caution that it was not this fact that had aroused the father's suspicions. It chanced that a shepherd had mentioned the viscount's return to Billot, without attaching any special importance to it; but the farmer, who, ever since his return to the farm and Catherine's illness, had felt convinced that young Charny was his daughter's lover, and who feared lest disgrace should be the result of this entanglement, inasmuch as the viscount could hardly marry Catherine, determined to put an end to the affair, not only speedily, but effectually. His daughter, however, divining his intentions, was resolved to warn Isidore at any cost; but Pitou very luckily frustrated this attempt, otherwise Catherine would have met her father instead of Isidore on the road.

Pitou stuck to his willow as closely as if he were a part of the tree; but it was not very long before his quick ear detected clumsy, irregular footsteps approaching; and as

the step was much too heavy for that of the young viscount, Pitou turned carefully around, and perceived the farmer only about thirty yards distant, with his gun on his shoulder.

Pitou instantly surmised that Billot, after having waited some time at the spring in vain for Catherine to appear, had come to the conclusion that he must have been mistaken in regard to the direction she had taken, or perhaps even in fancying he had seen her at all, and had therefore decided to hide near Catherine's window, feeling sure that the viscount would attempt to pay a visit to his sweetheart if she was still at the farm-house.

By an unlucky chance, what should Billot do but choose for his hiding-place the very clump of willows where Pitou was concealing himself.

Mistrusting the farmer's intentions, Pitou rolled softly down the bank into the ditch, where his head was concealed by the projecting roots of the very willow against which Billot was soon leaning.

Fortunately the wind was blowing quite strongly, or Billot might have heard the throbbing of Pitou's heart; but we must do our hero the justice to say that his own danger troubled him much less than a fear lest he should be obliged to break his promise to Catherine.

A quarter of an hour of painful suspense followed, but no sound had disturbed the stillness of the night, when suddenly Pitou fancied he heard a horse's gallop; and this horse, if it was a horse, must be coming along the foot-path leading from the wood.

Above him Pitou could see the farmer bending forward and trying to peer out into the gloom; but the night was so dark that even Pitou's keen eyes could only dimly discern a shadowy form crossing the road and then disappearing in the shadow of the fence which enclosed the yard of the farm-house.

Five minutes of unbroken silence followed; and then Pitou, thanks to the acuteness of his vision, managed to distinguish a human form near the farther end of the fence.

The man had evidently tied his horse to some tree further on, and was now returning on foot. The night was so dark that Pitou hoped Billot might not see this sort of spectre, or at least not see it until it was too late; but Billot did see it, and Pitou heard above his head the clicking sound made by the farmer in cocking his gun.

The man, who was gliding along in the shadow of the fence, also heard the sound, and paused for an instant to look around him. During this brief interval Pitou saw the gun slowly raised; but the farmer was probably doubtful of his aim at that distance, for the weapon was lowered as cautiously as it had been raised, and the shadowy form again began to move on towards Catherine's window. Again Pitou saw the gun raised, only to be lowered a second time: the victim was still too far away.

A half minute, perhaps, elapsed before the lover crossed the intervening space and tapped softly upon Catherine's window. Again the gun was raised, this time just as Catherine, recognising the signal, flung open her casement.

Pitou gasped as he almost felt the spring of the trigger above his head. The flint struck the steel, there was a sudden flash of light; but no explosion followed the glare, for only the priming had ignited. It was a flash in the pan.

Catherine had grasped Isidore's arm, and now, with almost superhuman strength, she dragged him into the room, saying, "It is my father; he knows all! Come!"

There was another bullet in the farmer's gun, but he could not kill the young viscount without killing, or at least wounding, his daughter; so he said grimly to himself, "The scoundrel will have to leave the house, and when he does, I won't miss him a second time."

For about five minutes not a sound was heard; then the dogs tied in the courtyard on the other side of the house began to bark furiously.

Billot muttered an oath, listened a moment, and then stamped his foot with rage. "She is sending him away

through the orchard!" he exclaimed, bounding across the stream over Pitou's head, in the hope of reaching the other end of the enclosure as soon as Isidore.

Pitou understood this manœuvre, and, rushing straight to Catherine's window, darted through that room, and through the kitchen beyond, into the courtyard, where he could distinguish two forms, one astride the wall, the other standing at the foot of it with arms uplifted.

Before springing down on the other side, her lover turned again to Catherine, and said, "We shall meet again. You are mine, remember."

"Yes, yes; but go, go!" responded the girl.

"Yes, go, Monsieur Isidore, go!" cried Pitou.

They heard the noise the young nobleman made as he struck the ground on the other side of the wall, then a neigh of recognition from his steed. Presently, too, they heard the horse's swift gallop; then one gunshot, and then another.

On hearing the first shot, Catherine uttered a cry, and made a movement as if to rush to Isidore's assistance. At the second she groaned, and fell swooning into Pitou's arms.

Pitou listened, with neck stretched eagerly forward, in order to determine whether the horse continued on his way with the same rapidity; and, hearing the animal pursuing his course uninterruptedly until the sound died away in the distance, he said to himself, "Good! there's some hope left. One can't see so well by night as by day, and one's hand is not so steady when one fires at a man as when one fires at a wolf or a boar."

He lifted Catherine up, with the intention of carrying her back to her room; but, with a powerful effort of will, she rallied all her strength, and, sliding to the ground, seized Pitou by the arm and whispered hoarsely, —

"Where do you intend taking me?"

"Why, back to your room, mademoiselle."

"Is there no place where I can hide, Pitou?"

"Oh, yes; or if there is not, I can find one," replied Pitou, not very logically.

"Then take me there; for all is over between me and the man who has tried to kill my lover."

"But, mademoiselle —" ventured Pitou.

"You refuse, then?"

"No, Mademoiselle Catherine; God forbid!"

"Then follow me."

And, walking on in advance, Catherine crossed the orchard and entered the kitchen garden. At the lower end of this garden there was a small gate in the close board fence that enclosed it. Without the slightest hesitation, Catherine opened this gate, took out the key, locked the gate behind her, and threw the key into a cistern near by.

Then, leaning on Pitou's arm, she walked on with a firm step over the rough, ploughed ground, and the two were soon lost to sight in the valley below.

No one witnessed their departure, and Heaven alone knew where Catherine found the shelter Pitou had promised her.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER THE TEMPEST.

MENTAL storms are not unlike meteorological storms. The sky becomes overcast, the thunder roars, the lightning flashes, the earth seems to tremble to its centre. There is a moment of frightful paroxysm, during which animate and inanimate things seem to be on the eve of annihilation, and we shudder and tremble, and lift our clasped hands imploringly to God as our only salvation.

Then quiet is gradually restored, the darkness flees, and daylight reappears; the sun bursts forth again; the flowers reopen their petals; the trees straighten themselves; men return to their business, their pleasures, and their loves, and cease to trouble themselves about the devastation which the hurricane has left in its wake.

This was the case at the farm. All night a terrible tempest raged in the heart of the father, who had only succeeded in partially carrying out his scheme of revenge. But when he at last discovered his daughter's flight; when he had searched in vain in the darkness for some trace of her footsteps; when he had called her name, first in anger, then in entreaty, and finally in despair, without receiving any response to these impassioned appeals, — his organisation, powerful as it was, succumbed to the shock, and a period of mental prostration ensued. But at last, when the quiet of exhaustion succeeded the thunder and lightning, as after an atmospheric storm; when the dogs, hearing nothing more to disturb them, ceased their barking; when rain had effaced the blood-stains which, like a half-loosed belt, encircled one side of the farm; when the

village clock — that mute witness of all that had taken place — sounded the last hour of the night, — then things resumed their wonted course at Pisseleu.

When the big gate of the courtyard creaked upon its rusty hinges and the labourers again sallied forth, — some to sow, some to plough, some to follow the harrow, — then Billot, too, appeared, bustling about here and there as usual.

At last, when it was broad daylight, and all the village was astir, some persons who had not slept quite so well as others remarked, half inquisitively, half carelessly, —

“Farmer Billot’s dogs barked dreadfully last night, and I’m almost sure I heard two shots fired near the farm-house.”

That was all.

When the worthy farmer returned to the house about nine o’clock for his breakfast, according to custom, his wife exclaimed, —

“Say, my good man, where is Catherine? Do you know?”

“Catherine thinks that the air here doesn’t agree with her, and has gone to Sologne to visit her aunt,” replied the farmer, with an evident effort.

“Will she stay long?”

“Until she feels better.”

Mother Billot sighed heavily, and pushed away her cup.

The farmer tried to eat, but the third mouthful seemed to choke him. Picking up a bottle of claret by the neck, he emptied it at a single draught; then said, in husky tones, “They haven’t unsaddled my horse, I hope?”

“No, Monsieur Billot,” responded the feeble voice of a child who came to the farm every morning for his breakfast.

“Good!” answered the farmer, pushing the lad aside; after which he remounted his horse and returned to the fields; while his wife, drying her tears, retreated to her usual seat in the chimney-corner.

Minus its brightest flower, minus its singing-bird, the farm seemed desolate indeed; but everything went on as usual that day and the day following.

As for Pitou, he saw the sun rise from his own house in Haramont; and those who passed at six o'clock saw his room lighted by a candle which had evidently been burning a long time, so badly did it need snuffing, — for Pitou was busily engaged in accounting for the use to which he had put the twenty-five louis Doctor Gilbert had given him for the equipment of the Haramont National Guards.

It is true, however, that a woodcutter did declare that he had seen Pitou, about midnight, descending the steep hill leading to Father Clouis' hut, carrying something heavy, that looked like a woman, in his arms; but this report seemed hardly probable, inasmuch as Father Lajeunesse pretended to have seen Pitou running with all his might along the road to Boursonnes about one o'clock in the morning, and Maniquet, who lived at the other end of the town on the Longpré side, declared that he saw Pitou pass his door about two o'clock, and that he called out, "Good-evening, Pitou!" a courtesy to which Pitou responded in kind.

There was consequently no reason whatever for doubting that Maniquet did see Pitou at two o'clock or thereabouts; but whether the woodcutter did or did not see Pitou about midnight near Clouise Rock, or whether Father Lajeunesse did or did not see Pitou running down the Boursonnes road about one o'clock, this much is certain: If Pitou, with whom we parted company about half-past ten in the evening, did go to Clouise Rock, and from Clouise Rock to Boursonnes, subsequently returning to Clouise Rock, and afterwards to his own home, — if Pitou did do all this, we may safely conjecture that he first took Catherine to a place of safety, then hastened to Boursonnes for news of the viscount, then hurried back to report to Catherine; thus making the distance covered between eleven o'clock in the evening and half-past two in the morning at least

eight or nine leagues, which seems almost incredible to persons not conversant with Pitou's extraordinary powers of locomotion.

Still, as Pitou kept his own counsel, no one except Désiré Maniquet knew for a certainty that it was really Pitou who had been seen in the vicinity of Clouise Rock and on the Boursonnes road.

About six o'clock the next morning, just as Farmer Billot was mounting his horse to start for the field, Pitou was seen quietly going over his account with Master Dulauroy, to which he appended the receipt of each of his men.

There was another person of our acquaintance whose slumbers were disturbed that night. This was Doctor Raynal. About one o'clock he was aroused by the Vicomte de Charny's lackey, who rang the bell as if he would jerk it off.

The doctor opened the door himself, according to his usual custom when the night-bell rang. The viscount's lackey had come on account of an accident which had befallen his master, and had brought a second horse with him, all saddled and bridled, so that there need be no delay.

The doctor dressed himself in the twinkling of an eye, jumped on the horse, and started off at a gallop, preceded by the lackey.

When he inquired into the nature of the accident, the messenger replied that he would be informed when he reached the château, but that he must be sure to bring his case of surgical instruments.

The accident proved to be a wound in the left side and a scratch on the right shoulder, made by two balls which seemed to be of the same calibre; but the viscount would give none of the particulars of the affair.

The wound in the side was serious, but not dangerous, as the bullet had passed through the flesh without touching any internal organ.

The other wound was not worth talking about. When the wounds were dressed, the young viscount handed the doctor twenty-five louis, and asked him to keep the matter a secret.

"If you wish me to say nothing about the affair, you must pay me only my usual fee of ten francs," replied the worthy doctor; and, taking a single louis (twenty-four francs) from the pile, he gave fourteen francs change to the viscount, who urged him to accept more.

This the doctor refused to do; but he said he thought three visits would be necessary, and that he should consequently return the next day and the day following.

On his second visit he found his patient up, and the next day, with the aid of a bandage to hold the plaster in place, Isidore was able to mount his horse; so no member of the household, except his confidential servant, was even aware of his accident.

On his third visit the doctor found his patient out, and so would accept only five francs for his visit.

Doctor Raynal was certainly one of the few physicians who deserve to have in their offices that famous engraving which represents Hippocrates declining the gifts of Artaxerxes.

CHAPTER XV.

MIRABEAU'S TREACHERY.

MIRABEAU'S last words to the queen on leaving the pavilion at St. Cloud have probably not been forgotten by our readers, —

“Madame, by this kiss the monarchy is saved!”

And Mirabeau certainly endeavoured to fulfil his promise. He began the struggle confident of his own strength, not dreaming that royal imprudence and three abortive conspiracies would result in his final undoing.

Perhaps, too, if he could have worked on in secret a while longer, he would have had a better chance of success; but one day, only a few weeks after his interview with the queen, while on his way to the Assembly, he saw groups of men standing here and there, evidently engaged in excited conversation.

He approached one of these groups to ascertain the cause of the commotion.

Small pamphlets were being handed about; and, ever and anon, the vendors of them shouted, “The Treachery of Monsieur de Mirabeau! Monsieur de Mirabeau's Treachery!”

“Ah, ha!” remarked Mirabeau, drawing a coin from his pocket, “this seems to concern me! My friend,” he continued, addressing a man who was distributing the pamphlets, and who had several thousand copies piled on the back of a donkey, “my friend, how much do you ask for ‘Mirabeau's Treachery’?”

“I am giving it away, Monsieur de Mirabeau,” replied the man, looking the count full in the face; “and there have been one hundred thousand copies printed,” he added in lower tones.

Portrait of Marie Antoinette.

Photo-Etching from an Old Print.



Mirabeau walked on. This pamphlet which was being given away, this distributor of them, who recognised him, — what did it all mean? Doubtless this was one of the slanderous publications so common in those days, — a publication whose evident malice and absurdity would deprive it of the power to make mischief.

Mirabeau glanced over the first page, and turned pale. The page contained a list of Mirabeau's indebtedness; and, strange to say, the amount was correct, — two hundred and eight thousand francs.

Below was given the exact date at which this amount was to be paid to Mirabeau's different creditors by Monsieur de Fontanges, the queen's treasurer.

Then came a statement of the amount to be paid Mirabeau monthly by the court, namely, six thousand francs; and, lastly, a full account of his interview with the queen: and what Mirabeau could not understand was this, — the figures were correct to a penny, and every word of the conversation was accurately repeated.

What strange mysterious enemy was thus attacking him, or, rather, attacking the monarchy through him?

It seemed to him that the face of the colporteur to whom he had spoken, and who had recognised him, and even called him by name, was strangely familiar to him.

He retraced his steps: the donkey was still there, with his panniers nearly empty now; but the first distributor had disappeared, and another man, a stranger to Mirabeau, had taken his place, and was conducting the distribution with as much alacrity as his predecessor.

Doctor Gilbert happened to pass just then; but he was so deeply absorbed in thought that he would have failed to notice the unusual commotion if Mirabeau, with his wonted audacity, had not walked up to him, taken him by the arm, and led him straight to the colporteur, who was about to stretch out his hand with a pamphlet and say to Gilbert, as to every one else, "All about Mirabeau's Treachery, citizen;" but on seeing the doctor, the man paused suddenly, as if paralysed.

Gilbert surveyed the man in his turn, and, dropping the pamphlet in disgust, turned away, saying, "This is an infamous job you are engaged in, Monsieur Beausire," and, taking Mirabeau's arm, continued on his way.

"Do you know that man?" inquired Mirabeau.

"I know him as well as one wants to know such a fellow. He is a gambler who, for want of something better to do, has turned slanderer."

"Ah, if it were only a slander!" murmured Mirabeau, sadly.

"Are you so little of a philosopher that you allow yourself to be cast down by such a trifle as this?"

"I! You don't know me, doctor. They say I'm bribed, when I am only paid. I'll buy a house to-morrow, and a carriage and horses, and hire servants, and keep open house. Cast down! I? What does the popularity of yesterday or the unpopularity of to-day matter? Have I no future before me? No, doctor; what troubles me so is a fear that I may not be able to keep the promise I have made. And this failure — if my efforts prove a failure — will be due to the treachery of the court towards me. I met the queen, and she seemed to trust me; and I — I dreamed, insensate fool that I was, with such a woman — I dreamed, not only of being the king's prime minister, like Richelieu, but the queen's lover, as Mazarin was the lover of Anne of Austria. And what did the queen do? That very day, after I left her, she wrote to her agent in Germany, Herr Flachslauden, 'Tell my brother Leopold that I have taken his advice and am making use of Mirabeau, but that there is nothing serious in my relations with him.'"

"Are you sure of this?"

"Perfectly sure; nor is this all. You know the question that is to be considered in the Assembly to-day, I suppose?"

"Some war measure, I believe; but I'm not very well posted as to the cause of dissension."

"It is very simple," replied Mirabeau. "Europe is

divided into two rival factions, — England and Prussia on one side, Austria and Russia on the other; but both are now moved by the same sentiment, — hatred of our Revolution. Such a manifestation of dislike is only natural on the part of Russia and Austria, as that is their natural bias; but in the case of philosophical Prussia and liberal England, it is very different, for some time is required to enable them to change from one extreme to the other. England, however, has seen Brabant stretching out her hands to France for help, and that has hastened England's decision; for a revolution is contagious. England does not declare war upon France, for she dares not do that yet; but she abandons Belgium to the Emperor Leopold, and will go to the ends of the earth to pick a quarrel with Spain, our ally. Well, yesterday the king informed the Assembly that he had placed fourteen ships on a war footing; that will be the subject of discussion at to-day's session. The question which arises is simply this: Which department of the government has the right to declare war? The king has already lost his right of jurisdiction in matters connected with the Interior Department, — such as levying taxes, etc., etc. He has also lost all control over the courts and the Department of Justice. If he loses control of the War Department, what is there left for him? But now, doctor, let us, as friends, discuss a question which cannot be safely broached in the Assembly. The Revolution is not complete yet, nor will it be until the sword is broken in the king's hand; for of all his prerogatives, the most dangerous is the power to make war."

"Then what shall you do, count?"

"Oh, I shall be faithful to my plighted word, and insist that this power be left in the king's hand; though this insistence on my part may cost me my popularity, and perhaps my life. I am about to propose to the Assembly a measure that will make the king triumphant, victorious. And what is the king doing at this very moment? He is having the keeper of the seals search the old parliamentary

records for certain ancient formulæ of protestation against the States General, in order to draw up a new protest against the Assembly."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes; and, oh, the pity of it, my dear Gilbert! There is entirely too much of this secrecy, and not enough frankness and publicity. That is the reason I want everybody to know that I, Mirabeau, am on the court's side, as I am. You think this slander will injure me. No; on the contrary, it will help me. It takes heavy clouds and strong winds to bring me out. Come in, doctor, come in, and you'll see a lively session; I promise you that."

And Mirabeau was not mistaken; he had a chance to display his courage immediately upon his entrance into the hall. Some shouted "Traitor!" under his very nose, while one man showed him a rope, and another a pistol; but Mirabeau only shrugged his shoulders and walked on, like Jean Bart, pushing aside those who stood in his way.

Barnave was in the rostrum, denouncing Mirabeau in the most vehement manner. Mirabeau stopped and looked him full in the face.

"Yes," said Barnave, "it is you whom I just called a traitor! It is you I am denouncing!"

"In that case I will take a turn in the garden of the Tuileries; I shall have plenty of time to get back before your peroration," was the cool response.

And, sure enough, he walked out of the hall, with head erect and defiant eye, amid a storm of hisses and imprecations.

Half-way down the main avenue a young lady, with a spray of verbena in her hand, was sitting, surrounded by a crowd of admiring listeners.

There was a vacant space on her left, and Mirabeau drew up a chair and seated himself by her side.

Many of the persons around her got up and walked away. Mirabeau smiled as he saw them go. The young lady offered him her hand.

"Ah, baroness, are you not afraid of catching the plague?" he asked.

"They say you are leaning towards our side, my dear count, and I would fain bring you still nearer," she replied.

Mirabeau smiled. For fully three-quarters of an hour he sat and chatted with this young woman, who was no other than Anne Louise Germaine Necker, Baroness de Staël; then, glancing at his watch, he remarked,—

"Ah, baroness, I must ask you to excuse me. Barnave is making a speech against me; he had been talking an hour when I left the Assembly. I have had the pleasure of chatting with you three-quarters of an hour. That makes about two hours that my friend has been on the rostrum, and his speech must be nearing its end; so I will go back and answer him. Give me that spray of verbena, baroness; it shall serve me as a talisman."

"This verbena? Have a care, my dear count; it is the herb for funeral libations, you know."

"Give it to me all the same; it is well to be crowned as a martyr when one descends into the arena to fight with brutes."

"It would indeed be difficult to be more brutish than the National Assembly of yesterday," remarked Madame de Staël, laughing.

"Why do you mention yesterday in particular, my dear baroness?"

And, taking the spray of verbena, which she gave him partly as a reward for his sarcasm, Mirabeau bowed gallantly, and returned to the Assembly.

Barnave was just descending from the tribune, amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the entire assemblage. Mirabeau was no sooner seen mounting the steps of the rostrum than a storm of curses and hisses assailed him. Lifting his powerful hand, he waited for the tumult to subside; then, taking advantage of one of those intervals of quiet which occur alike amid tempests and riots, he exclaimed,—

"I know only too well that it was not far from the Capitol to the Tarpeian rock."

Such is the power of genius that this remark silenced the most angry of his auditors; and, when silence was thus secured, the victory was more than half won in Mirabeau's case.

He demanded that the king should be given the right to declare war. This demand was considered too great, and was refused. Then began a fight over the proposed amendments. The first attack having been repulsed, it was necessary to win the day by repeated onslaughts.

Barnave's speech had lasted two hours. Mirabeau mounted the rostrum five different times, and finally secured the following concessions, — namely, that the king should have the right to make preparations for war, and to distribute the forces as he saw fit; that he should also have the right to propose a declaration of war to the Assembly, and that the Assembly could adopt no warlike measures that were not sanctioned by the king.

Who knows what other concessions he might have obtained, but for that widely-distributed brochure entitled, "Mirabeau's Treachery."

After the session was over, Mirabeau narrowly escaped being torn in pieces; Barnave, on the contrary, was borne away in triumph by the people.

Poor Barnave! the day was not far distant when he, in turn, would hear a cry of "Monsieur Barnave's Treachery."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

MIRABEAU left the Assembly with head proudly erect, and flashing eyes. So long as he was in the presence of danger, he thought only of the task before him, not of his own strength.

In this respect he resembled Marshal Saxe at the battle of Fontenoy. Weak and ill, Saxe remained all day in the saddle, firmer than the bravest soldier in his command; but when the English ranks were broken, and their army was in full retreat, he fell dying upon the field he had won.

It was the same with Mirabeau. On his return home he sank down exhausted upon a pile of cushions in the midst of a profusion of flowers; for Mirabeau had two passions, — women and flowers.

Since the beginning of the session his health had undergone a decided change for the worse. Notwithstanding his vigorous constitution, he had suffered much, both physically and mentally, from persecution and imprisonment; so for years he had not known what it was to be well.

This time he felt that his condition was even more critical than usual, and he offered little or no opposition when his lackey urged the necessity of sending for a physician. They were still discussing the matter, however, when the bell rang, and Doctor Gilbert was ushered into the room.

"I could not go home without congratulating you, my dear count," said Gilbert. "You promised me a victory to-day; you did better than that, — you achieved a triumph."

"Yes; but you see that though it may have been a triumph, it was won at as terrible a cost as that of Pyrrhus. One more such triumph, doctor, and I am a dead man."

Gilbert looked at Mirabeau.

"Yes; there is no doubt about it. You are ill," he remarked.

"Yes; anybody else who lived as I live would have died a hundred times," replied Mirabeau, shrugging his shoulders. "I have two secretaries; they are both overworked. Pelliric, especially, — whose business it is to copy the loose sheets covered with my abominable chirography, — has been sick in bed three days; and I can't get along without him, because he alone can decipher my scrawls and understand my meaning. Doctor, give me something, — I don't say to make me live, but to give me strength while I do live."

"What can you expect?" said Gilbert, after he had felt the sick man's pulse. "There is no advice one can give to a person with an organisation like yours. How is one to recommend rest to a man who finds strength only in action; or temperance to a genius which flourishes only in the midst of excesses? If I advise the removal of these flowers, which emit oxygen by day and carbonic acid by night, — why, flowers have become a necessity to you, and you suffer more from their absence than their presence. If I warn you to shun the society of ladies as well as the flowers, you say you would rather die. Live on, then, count, according to your taste; but indulge only in scentless flowers and platonic affections."

"That last bit of advice is hardly needed, my dear doctor. Three years in prison, one death sentence, the suicide of the woman whom I loved, but who killed herself for the sake of another man, have cured me of any ambition of that sort. For a brief instant, as I told you, I dreamed of an alliance like that between Elizabeth and Essex, between Anne of Austria and Mazarin; but it

was only a dream, and the woman for whose sake I have struggled, I have not seen since that interview, and shall probably never see again. Ah, Gilbert, there is no torture so great as the feeling that one carries gigantic projects in one's brain, — the prosperity of a kingdom, the fate of one's friends, the annihilation of one's enemies, and that a single throw of the dice may ruin them all! Oh, the follies of my youth! How bitterly I have had to atone for them! Why do the royal family distrust me so? Except on one or two occasions, when I was driven to the wall, and compelled to strike back in self-defence, have I not been on their side from the first to the last? Did I not contend for the king's right to an absolute veto, when Monsieur Necker was content with a provisional one? Did I not oppose the proceedings of the night of the fourth of August, when the nobility were deprived of their privileges? To-day — yes, even to-day — have I not served royalty far beyond its deserts? Have I not secured for it what no other person, be he prince or cabinet minister, could have secured; and have I not done this at the expense of my reputation, my popularity, my very life? And what recompense have I received? Once, and only once, I have been allowed to speak to the queen. Yet, now I think of it, if my father had not died so short a while before the taking of the Bastille, and if common decency had not prevented me from appearing in public the second day after his death, — the day Lafayette was appointed commander of the National Guard, and Bailly was made mayor of Paris, — I should unquestionably have been chosen mayor instead of Bailly. What a change this would have made in the state of things! In that case the king would have seen the necessity of keeping on good terms with me, and I should have inspired him with entirely different feelings towards a city which is really the revolutionary centre of our land. I should have won his confidence, and induced him, before the evil became too deeply seated, to adopt decisive as well as preventive

measures. Instead, I am merely a deputy, — a suspected, much-feared, much-hated man, — kept away from the king, and basely slandered to the queen. Do you know, doctor, that when she met me at St. Cloud she positively turned pale? It is easy enough to understand the reason. Has she not been led to believe that I caused the horrors of the fifth and sixth of October? And yet, during all this past year, I have endeavoured to do everything it was in the power of man to do; but to-day, ah, to-day, both for the safety of the monarchy and myself, I fear it is too late!”

His face contracted with pain as he uttered the concluding words.

“You are suffering, count,” remarked Gilbert.

“The agonies of the damned. There are days when I am almost tempted to believe that my enemies are slowly but surely poisoning me. Do you believe in the aqua tofana of Pérouse, the famous Inheritance Powder of La-voisin, and the Borgia poisons, doctor?” asked Mirabeau, smiling.

“No, but I believe in the fiery steel that wears out its scabbard; in the lamp whose expanding flame shatters its globe,” replied Gilbert; and as he spoke he drew a small vial, containing a couple of thimblefuls of greenish liquid, from his pocket.

“Come, count, suppose we try an experiment,” he added.

“What is it?” asked Mirabeau.

“One of my friends, — and I wish he were one of yours as well, — a man thoroughly conversant with all the natural sciences, and with occult science too, he claims, has given me the recipe for this decoction as a sovereign antidote, an infallible panacea for all human ills, — an elixir of life, as it were. Will you try it?”

“I would take anything, even the deadly hemlock, from your hand, my dear doctor. Does it require any preparation, or do you take it clear?”

“No; for this preparation is very powerful. Tell your

servant to bring you a few drops of brandy or spirits of wine in a spoon."

"The deuce! It must be liquid fire, if brandy and spirits of wine are needed to dilute your preparation. I didn't suppose any one had drunk such a beverage since Prometheus administered it to the great ancestor of the human race. I warn you, though, that my lackey may not be able to find a dozen drops of brandy in the house. I do not derive my eloquence from that source, as they say Pitt does his."

The lackey returned a few minutes later, however, with a spoon containing five or six drops of brandy.

To this Gilbert added about an equal quantity of liquid from the vial. As soon as the two combined they became the colour of absinthe. Mirabeau seized the spoon, and hastily swallowed its contents.

"*Morbleu!* doctor," he exclaimed, "you did well to warn me that your drug was so powerful. It seems to me that I have literally swallowed lightning."

Gilbert smiled; he seemed to feel entire confidence in the efficacy of his remedy.

Mirabeau stood for a moment as if he were being consumed by the fiery fluid. His head drooped upon his breast, and he pressed his hands upon his stomach; but suddenly he raised his head and said, "Ah, doctor, it is indeed the elixir of life that you just made me drink."

Then springing up, and inhaling a deep breath, and stretching out his arms, he added, "Now, even though the monarchy is tottering, I feel that I have strength enough to sustain it."

"You feel better, then?" asked Gilbert, smiling.

"Tell me where they sell this decoction, doctor. I'd have that fiery liquid, though I had to give a diamond of equal size for every drop of it, and renounce every other luxury of life; for I feel that it would make me invincible."

"Promise me, count, that you will not take this remedy

more than twice a week, and to apply to no one but myself for a renewal of your supply, and this little bottle is yours."

"Give it to me, and I will promise anything you wish."

"Good! but that is not all. You think of purchasing a carriage and horses, you said just now."

"Yes."

"Then take a house in the country. These flowers which vitiate the air of your rooms would purify the air of your garden. The daily drives to and from Paris would also be very beneficial to you. Select a residence, too, on high ground, if possible on the edge of a forest or near a river, — at Bellevue, St. Germain, or Argenteuil, say."

"At Argenteuil? Why, that would be the very thing. I sent my man out to look me up a house there the other day. Didn't you tell me, Teisch, that you had found something at Argenteuil which you thought would just suit me?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the man, who had been waiting on the doctor. "Yes; a very lovely house a countryman of mine spoke to me about. It seems he lived there formerly with his master, a foreign banker. It is vacant now, and monsieur can take possession of it whenever he pleases."

"Where is it?"

"Just out of Argenteuil. It is called the Château Marais."

"Oh, I know the house well," said Mirabeau. "When my father drove me from home with his curse and several sound blows of his cane, he was living at Argenteuil, and I often used to walk up and down in front of that same beautiful house and exclaim, with Horace, *O rus, quando te aspiciam!*"

"Well, the time for realising this dream of your youth has come. Take the house, and transport your household to it, — the sooner the better."

Mirabeau reflected a moment; then, turning to Gilbert, said, —

"It is certainly your duty to watch over the invalid you have restored to life. It is only five o'clock, and the days are now at their longest. The weather, too, is exceptionally fine. Drive out to Argenteuil with me."

"So be it. When one assumes charge of anything so precious as your health, count, no possible precaution should be neglected. Let us go and take a good look at your villa."

CHAPTER XVII.

THERE IS NO RELATIONSHIP BEYOND THE FOURTH DEGREE.

It was in Argenteuil that Mirabeau's father died, on July 11, 1789, like a true nobleman who would not consent to live to witness the taking of the Bastile.

On reaching the end of the Argenteuil bridge, Mirabeau ordered the coachman to pause.

"Have we reached our destination?" inquired the doctor.

"Yes and no. We have not reached the Château du Marais, — that is a mile or two the other side of Argenteuil; but we are making to-day, my dear doctor, a sort of pilgrimage, — a pilgrimage of three stations."

"A pilgrimage? To the shrine of what saint?"

"Saint Riquetti, my dear doctor; though I doubt very much if God has ratified the canonisation of man in this case. Still, it is none the less true that here died Riquetti, Marquis de Mirabeau, — the Friend of Mankind, as he was called, a martyr to the extravagance and debauchery of his unworthy son, Honoré Gabriel Victor Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau."

"True; though I had forgotten the fact. That is not strange, however, as I was a prisoner in the Bastile at the time. Where did your father live?"

They had alighted from the carriage, and, as Gilbert asked the question, they were standing directly in front of a mansion situated on the pier, and facing the river, from which it was separated only by a small lawn and a row of trees.

Seeing strangers stop in front of the gate, an enormous dog sprang forward, growling ominously, and thrust his

head between the bars, trying to grab a mouthful of Mirabeau's flesh, or at least a fragment of his coat.

"Heavens! doctor," exclaimed Mirabeau, retreating a step to escape the sharp white teeth of the dog, "nothing is changed. I am received exactly as if my father were alive."

Just then a youth appeared, who, after silencing the dog, advanced towards the strangers.

"Pray do not consider the inmates of the house responsible for the unfriendly reception their dog has given you, gentlemen," said the young man. "Many persons stop in front of this house, which was once occupied by the Marquis de Mirabeau; and as our poor Cartouche does not understand the historic interest which attaches to the spot, he is for ever growling. — Get back to your kennel, Cartouche!"

The young man made a threatening gesture, and the dog sullenly retreated to his house.

"And now, gentlemen, I should be pleased to open the door and welcome you, if your interest is not confined to the exterior of the dwelling," continued the young man.

"You have read our thoughts exactly, monsieur," replied Mirabeau. "Knowing that this house was formerly occupied by the so-called Friend of Mankind, we are anxious to see it."

"And it may increase your interest to know that while the father resided here, the house was honoured on two or three occasions by visits from his illustrious son, who, if we may believe hearsay, was not always received as he deserved to be, and as we would receive him if he should ever evince the same desire which you express, and which I am only too glad to gratify."

As he spoke he unfastened the gate, admitted the two visitors, and was about to lead the way to the house; but Cartouche did not seem inclined to let the strangers accept the proffered hospitality, for he again sprang out of his kennel, barking furiously.

The young man threw himself between the dog and Mirabeau, to whom the animal seemed to have taken a special dislike; but Mirabeau gently pushed the youth aside.

"Dogs and men always bark at me," he remarked quietly; "but though men have bitten me, no dog ever has. It is said that the human eye has a strange power in such cases; so, if you will allow me, I'll try an experiment."

"I warn you that Cartouche is not to be trusted, monsieur," said the young man, hastily.

"Never mind, monsieur; I have to deal with more ferocious beasts than Cartouche every day, so you need have no fears."

"Yes; but you can talk to those other hounds," interposed Gilbert, "and no one can doubt the power of your eloquence."

"I thought you were a strong believer in magnetism, doctor?"

"So I am."

"Then you certainly cannot doubt the power of the human eye as well. Let me magnetise Cartouche."

"Try it," said Gilbert.

"Don't expose yourself, monsieur," pleaded the young man.

"By your leave," said Mirabeau.

The young man bowed a reluctant assent, and stepped a little to one side. Gilbert did the same, and the two stood as if they were about to witness a duel between some friend and a bloodthirsty opponent.

The dog moved his head from right to left, as if to take a good look at his enemy, and satisfy himself that he was cut off from all assistance; then, seeing him alone and defenceless, he crawled slowly out of his kennel, more after the manner of a serpent than a quadruped, then suddenly leaped forward, clearing about one-third of the space between him and his adversary at a single bound.

Mirabeau folded his arms upon his breast, and with that

intense and powerful gaze which won him the appellation of the Jupiter of the rostrum, he fixed his eyes on the animal. All the electricity in his powerful body seemed to concentrate itself in his countenance. His hair bristled like a lion's mane; and if it had been later in the evening, and consequently darker, one would doubtless have seen each hair glittering with electric fire.

The dog stopped short and looked at him. Mirabeau stooped, and, hastily catching up a handful of gravel, threw it straight in the animal's face.

The angry dog growled, and made another spring, which brought him within about four feet of his adversary; but next time it was the man that advanced towards the dog, who, evidently alarmed by Mirabeau's steady approach, crouched on his hind legs, though his teeth and eyes still gleamed ominously. At last Mirabeau raised his arm with a commanding gesture, — the same he was wont to use when he hurled sarcasm and invective upon his opponents from the tribune; whereupon the conquered dog, trembling in every limb, drew back, then, glancing behind him to see if retreat was still possible, suddenly turned tail and darted back into his kennel.

Mirabeau threw back his head, as proud and delighted as any victor in the games of ancient Greece.

"Ah, doctor," he remarked, "my father was quite right in saying that dogs were true types of humanity. You shall see this cowardly bully become as cringing as any man. Here, Cartouche, here!"

The dog hesitated; but as his conqueror made an imperious gesture, he again crawled out of his kennel, and, with his eyes fixed on Mirabeau's face, crossed the intervening space until he reached the great orator's feet; then, slowly and timidly raising his head, he licked the tips of his conqueror's fingers with his red and quivering tongue.

"That's right," said Mirabeau. "Now back to your house;" and at a sign from him the dog went back and stretched himself out on the straw.

"Do you know what I was thinking of when I indulged in that piece of nonsense just now?" Mirabeau asked, turning to Gilbert.

"No; but you did not act as you did out of mere bravado, I am sure."

"I was thinking of that eventful night of the fifth and sixth of October; and, doctor, I would give half the remaining years of my life for Louis XVI. to have seen that dog spring at me, slink back to his kennel, and then come out and lick my hand." Then, turning to the young man, he added, "You will pardon me for having thus humiliated Cartouche, I trust. Now let us inspect the former abode of the Friend of Mankind, as you are kind enough to offer to show it to us."

With the spirit of domination habitual to him, Mirabeau immediately ceased to be a mere spectator, and became the chief actor in the scene. One would have supposed him to be the master of the house, in fact, instead of a visitor.

The youth who had admitted them summoned his father; and, while the latter was listening to the story of Cartouche's subjugation, Mirabeau showed Gilbert the study and bedroom occupied by the former owner; and as each nook and corner awakened some recollection, Mirabeau related anecdote after anecdote, with that wonderful power of narration for which he was famous.

The tour of inspection was consequently not concluded until the bell of the neighbouring church struck the hour of seven, warning them how fast the time was passing; so Mirabeau declared that they must leave immediately, and he himself set the example by leaping down the first four steps to a turn in the staircase.

"You seem to be so familiar with the history of the late marquis and his illustrious son," remarked their host, "that I fancy you could tell us the story about those four steps, if you were so inclined."

"True; but I intended to pass that by in silence," replied Mirabeau.

"And why?" inquired the doctor.

"You shall judge. After escaping from his dungeon at Vincennes, where he had been a prisoner eighteen months, the younger Mirabeau, being twice the age of the Prodigal Son, but perceiving no preparations for killing the fatted calf in delight over his return, took it into his head to come here and claim his rights. But he was not at all welcome, for two reasons. In the first place, he had come from Vincennes against his father's wishes; and, in the second place, he came to ask for money. The consequence was that the old marquis, who was engaged in putting the finishing touches to some philanthropical dissertation, sprang up, and, seizing his cane, rushed upon his son as soon as the word 'money' was mentioned. The young count knew his father well, but had hoped that his thirty-seven years might protect him from corporal punishment, to say the least; but he saw his mistake when he felt a shower of blows from the cane descend upon his shoulders."

"What! blows from a cane?" exclaimed Gilbert.

"Yes, and good round blows, too; not such as you see dealt at the *Comédie Française*, but real blows, — quite powerful enough to split one's head open and break one's bones."

"And what did the son do?"

"Do? He did what Horace did in his first battle, — ran away, clearing these first four steps at a single bound, as I did just now. On the landing he paused a moment, however, and, lifting his cane, in turn, like his father, exclaimed, 'Look out, monsieur; there is no relationship below the fourth step!' It was a very poor pun, this comparison of the steps of a stairway to the different grades or degrees of relationship, but it stopped the old marquis all the same; for he said, 'What a pity the bailiff,' meaning his brother, 'is dead! I'd like to tell him that.' Mirabeau was too shrewd not to take advantage of this opportunity to beat a retreat, and he never entered the house again during his father's lifetime. The count was a great scoundrel, was n't he?"

"Oh, monsieur," exclaimed the youth who had admitted them, clasping his hands as if asking forgiveness for thus differing from his guest, "I should call him rather a great man."

"Ah, ha! then there are really some people in the world who think well of Mirabeau?"

"Yes, monsieur; and even at the risk of displeasing you, I must say that I am one of them."

"Don't say that aloud in this house, though," replied Mirabeau, laughing, "or the walls may tumble down about your ears."

Bidding his host a courteous farewell, Mirabeau crossed the courtyard, making a sign of good-will to Cartouche, and ordered the coachman to drive them to the church; but at the corner of the first street they came to he stopped the carriage, and said to his servant, "Teisch, take this card back to that young man who disagrees with me in my opinion of Monsieur de Mirabeau."

A few minutes afterwards Teisch returned, accompanied by the youth.

"Oh, Monsieur de Mirabeau!" he exclaimed, in accents of profound admiration, "grant me the same privilege you granted Cartouche, — that of kissing your hand."

Mirabeau opened his arms and pressed the youth to his heart.

"Count, my name is Mornais," the young man exclaimed brokenly; "and if you ever need the aid of one who would gladly die for you, call upon me."

Mirabeau's eyes filled with tears.

"Ah, doctor, this is one of the men who are to come after us," he cried. "Upon my word, I believe they will be far nobler men than we are."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LADY RESEMBLING THE QUEEN.

As the carriage drew up in front of the church, Mirabeau said: "I told you recently that I had never set foot in Argenteuil since my father turned me out of doors. I forgot; I came back the day I followed his body to this church."

As he stopped speaking, Mirabeau alighted from the carriage and removed his hat. It was with uncovered head and slow and solemn tread that he entered the edifice; for he was a strange contradiction, and clung to the outward observances of religion at a time when everybody was either a so-called philosopher or an atheist.

Gilbert followed at a distance, as Mirabeau walked the length of the church, until he reached a massive pillar near the altar. Here he paused, and stood for some time with bowed head, gazing at a black marble slab inserted in a niche near the altar; and as the doctor's eyes followed his companion's, they fell upon the following inscription:—

Here rests

FRANÇOISE DE CASTELLANE, MARQUISE DE MIRABEAU,
a model of piety and virtue, a beloved wife and mother.

Born in Dauphiny, 1685; died in Paris, 1769.

She was first interred in St.-Sulpice, Paris,
then brought here to be reunited in the same grave
with her worthy son,

VICTOR DE RIQUETTI, MARQUIS DE MIRABEAU,
surnamed the FRIEND OF HUMANITY:

Born at Pertuis, in Provence, October 4, 1715;
died at Argenteuil, July 11, 1789.

Pray for their Souls.

Death and religious feeling are so closely connected in the human mind that Doctor Gilbert bowed his head for an instant, and involuntarily searched his memory for some prayer, that he might comply with the request upon this burial stone; but even if Gilbert had ever learned the language of faith and humility in infancy, scepticism — that gangrene of the last century — had effaced it from his recollection. Finding his heart and tongue alike mute, Gilbert looked up, and saw tears rolling down Mirabeau's strong face, furrowed by passion as the sides of a volcano are scored by fiery lava.

These tears moved Gilbert so deeply that he stepped to Mirabeau's side and took his hand.

Mirabeau understood him.

Tears shed in memory of a father who had imprisoned and tortured his son seemed so incomprehensible that Mirabeau hastened to explain.

"She was a good woman, this Françoise de Castellane, my father's mother," he remarked. "Though everybody else thought me hideous, she considered me only plain; when everybody else hated me, she seemed really quite fond of me. But the person she loved best in the world was her son; so I have reunited them, as you see. But who will reunite me to them? Whose bones will rest beside mine? I have not even a dog to love me!" and he laughed bitterly.

"Monsieur, people do not laugh in church," said a rasping, sanctimonious, reproachful voice, — the voice of a bigot.

Mirabeau turned and saw a priest standing near him.

"Are you the priest of this parish?" he asked mildly.

"Yes."

"Have you many poor under your charge?"

"More poor people than rich people who are inclined to relieve them."

"Still, you must have some charitable and philanthropical persons in your congregation."

The priest laughed.

"You just now did me the honour to tell me that people do not laugh in church, monsieur," remarked Mirabeau.

"Do you propose to take me to task, monsieur?" demanded the priest, considerably offended.

"No, monsieur; but to show you that persons who are disposed to aid their fellow-men are not so rare as you suppose. It is quite probable that I shall soon take up my abode in the Château du Marais; and if I do, every labourer who is out of work can find employment there at good wages, every hungry man can come there for bread, and every invalid can find help there, whatever his religious or political opinions may be. Beginning from this day, I offer you, Monsieur le Curé, the sum of one thousand francs per month to be devoted to charitable purposes."

And tearing a leaf from his note-book, he wrote on it, in pencil, the following lines:—

"Good for the amount of twelve thousand (12,000) francs, which the curé of Argenteuil is to expend for me, at the rate of 1,000 francs per month, in charitable purposes, beginning with the first day of my residence at the Château du Marais.

"Done at the Argenteuil Church, and signed upon the Altar of the Virgin.
"MIRABEAU."

The priest was stupefied when he saw the signature, and still more so when he had read the agreement.

The two friends then re-entered the carriage, which followed the main street to the very end and then took the road leading towards Besons. They had not gone a hundred rods in this direction, however, before Mirabeau discerned on his right several thick clumps of trees pierced by the slate-covered turrets of a château and its appurtenances. To the right of the road, near the gate of the avenue leading up to the château, stood a dilapidated cottage, and in the doorway sat a woman holding a sick child in her arms; and as she rocked the emaciated little one, she raised her eyes imploringly to heaven and wept.

Mirabeau noted the sorrowful scene, and, turning to Gilbert, said, "Doctor, I am as superstitious as any old woman. If that child dies, I won't take the château. I want you to see if you can do anything for the poor little thing; and as we have only about twenty minutes of daylight left, I will drop you here, while I go on and inspect the château."

Then to the mother he said, —

"My good woman, this gentleman is a great physician; he will try to cure your child. Give thanks to Heaven, which has sent him to your aid."

Five minutes afterwards, Teisch rang the bell at the gate of the château. Mirabeau knew the place, as we have said before; but he had never had an opportunity to examine it closely until now. Passing through the gateway, he found himself in the outer courtyard, which was nearly square. To the right stood a small house or pavilion occupied by the gardener; to the left stood another similar to it, but its surroundings made it wonderfully charming. Gigantic rose-bushes in full bloom wreathed its walls, and every window was shielded by a curtain of carnations, heliotropes, and fuchsias. In front of the cottage was a tiny garden filled with lilies and roses and geraniums, — a veritable carpet of flowers, such as Penelope might have embroidered.

We have already alluded to Mirabeau's passion for flowers. On beholding this charming retreat, he uttered an exclamation of admiration and delight, and said to the gardener, "Is this cottage, too, for sale or to be let, my friend?"

"Certainly, monsieur, as it belongs to the château. It is occupied just now, but the occupant holds no lease of it; and, if monsieur desires, the tenant can be sent away."

"Who is the tenant?"

"A lady."

"Young?"

"Thirty or thirty-five."

"Handsome?"

"Very handsome."

"Well, we will see. A beautiful neighbour would certainly be no objection. Let me take a look at the château, my friend."

The gardener opened the principal door, which led into a hall adorned with niches filled with statues, and pedestals supporting vases, after the fashion of the day.

The door at the other end of the hall led out into a large garden. To the right of this hall were a billiard and dining room, and to the left two parlours, one large and one small.

On the floor above was a large and well-lighted apartment admirably adapted for an office or study, and three or four bedrooms.

The windows were all closed. Mirabeau stepped up to one to open it; and the gardener was about to open the others, but Mirabeau made a sign to him not to do so.

Just under the window which Mirabeau had opened, at the foot of a big weeping-willow, a woman was reclining, reading, while a child five or six years old played on the turf a short distance from her.

Mirabeau understood at once that this was the lady of the pavilion.

No one could have been more daintily and beautifully arrayed. She wore a loose, exquisitely fine white muslin gown, richly trimmed with lace, over taffeta silk, and coquettishly adorned with bows of pink and white ribbon.

Her hands were beautiful, with taper fingers and aristocratic, beautifully kept nails. The child was dressed in a suit of white satin, and wore a Henry IV. hat and a tri-coloured sash, — a strange combination, but one quite in vogue at that time. In fact, his dress was almost identical with that worn by the young dauphin the last time he appeared on the balcony of the Tuileries in company with his mother.

While Mirabeau was eagerly devouring the beautiful

reader with his eyes, either purely by chance, or because she was influenced by a magnetic current, she glanced up from her book to the very window at which Mirabeau was standing.

On beholding him she uttered a faint cry of surprise, arose, called the child, and walked away, holding him by the hand, but not without looking back several times.

Mirabeau had responded to her cry of surprise by one of astonishment; for the fair lady not only had Marie Antoinette's queenly bearing, but her features also—as far as Mirabeau was able to distinguish through the veil of fleecy lace that covered her face—bore a striking resemblance to those of Marie Antoinette.

This resemblance, too, was increased by the presence of the boy, who was exactly the age of the second child of the queen,—of that queen whose face, walk, and slightest movement had remained so ever present, not only in the memory, but in the heart of Mirabeau, since that interview at St. Cloud.

What miracle had brought this mysterious woman—who, if not the queen herself, was certainly her living image—into the grounds of the mansion of which Mirabeau contemplated taking a lease?

Just at that instant the count felt a hand on his shoulder.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNKNOWN LADY
BEGINS TO ASSERT ITSELF.

MIRABEAU turned with a start. It was Doctor Gilbert who had touched him on the shoulder.

"Well, is there any hope for the child?" inquired the count.

"A physician should never cease to hope, even in the presence of death itself."

"The deuce, doctor! I suppose that is equivalent to saying that the malady is serious."

"It is more than serious; it is mortal."

"What is the matter with the child?"

"The poor little thing has a fever, of which it will probably die in less than a week. The mother was helping the gardener to cut the grass a few days ago, and laid the child down on the ground only a few steps from one of those ditches of stagnant water which encircle the park. When she returned to it, she found it injured, not only by prolonged exposure to the sun, which had overheated its young brain, but by the absorption of the marshy effluvia which bring on that sort of poisoning known as malaria."

"I can't say that I altogether understand you."

"I am more than willing to enter into particulars, inasmuch as these particulars should certainly not be devoid of interest to a man who has nearly decided to take up his abode in this château, without realising the danger to which he is exposing himself. You have heard more or less, of course, in relation to the fevers which come from the Pontine marshes, as well as of the deadly miasma that arises from the Tuscan swamps?"

"Yes; and Cabanis was telling me something not unlike this about the Assembly Hall at the riding-school. He even pretends that if I do not go out several times during the session and inhale the fresh air of the Tuileries garden, I shall die of poisoning."

"And Cabanis is right. The architect who planned the riding-school never once thought of constructing the chimneys in such a way as to enable them to carry off the foul air, or to arrange for the admission of pure air by a system of pipes. The result is that the eleven hundred pairs of lungs shut up in that hall speedily exhaust the oxygen, and leave carbonic acid in its place. Consequently, at the end of an hour, especially in winter, when the windows are closed and the stoves heated, the air is not only unfit to breathe, but may even reach a degree of vitiation that converts it into positive poison."

"You seem to intimate that I am half poisoned already, doctor."

"Precisely. In my opinion your intestinal suffering comes from no other cause; but you must understand that the effect of the poison you breathe in the Assembly Hall is in your case augmented by the effects of the poison you also inhaled in the archbishop's palace, in the dungeon at Vincennes, in the fortress at Joux, and the Château d'If. Don't you recollect that Madame de Bellegarde once said that there was a chamber worth its weight in arsenic at Vincennes?"

"Do you mean that the poor child you have just seen is similarly poisoned?"

"Yes, my dear count; only in his case the poison has affected the coatings of the brain, and brought on what is generally styled cerebral fever; though I should call it by another name,—say hydrocephalic ague; a malady which causes convulsions, lockjaw, laboured respiration, purple lips, a pulse which palpitates rather than throbs, and, finally, a viscid sweat over the entire body."

"Your enumeration fairly gives me the horrors, doctor. What have you prescribed for the poor little thing?"

"Cooling applications to the head, irritants to the extremities, emetics, and a decoction of that invaluable tonic known as Peruvian bark."

"And will all these remedies do no good?"

"Not much, unless nature comes to the child's aid. I prescribed the treatment chiefly to ease my conscience. Its good angel, if it has one, must do the rest."

"Hum!"

"You understand, do you not?"

"Your theory of poisoning by the oxide of carbon? Yes; at least, partially."

"No, not that. I want to know if you understand that the air here will not suit you?"

"You think it will not, doctor?"

"I am positive of it."

"That is very unfortunate, for the château suits me perfectly."

"There you are again, — your own most persistent enemy, as usual! I advise an elevated site: you select a flat locality; I suggest running water: you choose a stagnant pool."

"But look at these fine trees, doctor."

"Sleep here a single night with open windows, or walk about in the shade of those beautiful trees, and I shall hear of you the next day."

"You mean that I shall be poisoned outright, instead of being half poisoned, as I am now?"

"Do you want the truth?"

"Yes; and you are giving it to me, are you not?"

"Yes, in all its nakedness. Listen carefully to what I am about to say, my dear count. I state the facts rather as a philosophical observer than as a physician. As a general thing, acute maladies are governed by fixed rules. In infancy it is the brain that is attacked; in youth it is the chest; in persons of maturer years it is the bowels; in old age, either the heart or the brain, — that is, the organs which have been used most and suffered most."

"One would think my heart knew what you were talking about; see how it throbs;" and as he spoke, Mirabeau took the doctor's hand and pressed it upon his heart.

"This illustrates what I am saying exactly," responded the doctor. "How can you suppose that an organ which shares all your emotions, which increases or decreases the number of its pulsations in following a pathological conversation, — how can you suppose that such an organ could escape being affected? Through the heart you have conquered; through the heart you will be conquered. There is not a single emotion or physical sensation which does not give a man a sort of fever; and there is no such thing as fever without a more or less great acceleration of heart-beats. My friend, the heart is like a purse: no matter how well lined it may be, if we go to it often enough it becomes exhausted. Now I have shown you the worst side of your condition, allow me to speak of the brighter side. The heart must not be overtaxed. Ask no more of it than it is able to perform with ease, subject it to no more excitement than it can well bear, and you may live twenty or thirty years longer, and die of old age. On the contrary, if you wish to commit suicide, nothing could be easier. Just imagine you are driving a pair of fiery steeds: compel them to trot along moderately, and they will hold out a long time; allow them to gallop, and, like the fabled steeds of the sun, they will make the circuit of the sky in a single day and night."

"I will think about all you have just said," replied Mirabeau. "But it is getting late now, doctor; we must be off."

"Reflect upon it as much as you please, but begin by obeying the orders of the faculty. Promise me, first of all, not to take this château. You will find a dozen, yes, fifty residences near Paris which will offer the same advantages as this, without being open to the same objections."

Perhaps Mirabeau would have heeded the voice of reason

and given the desired promise, but suddenly he fancied he caught sight of the face of that same beautiful woman peeping out from behind a screen of flowers. This woman smiled, — at least so Mirabeau fancied, but he had no opportunity to make sure; for, convinced from the nervous tremor he noticed in the arm upon which he was leaning that some sudden change had taken place in his patient's mood, the doctor glanced in the same direction. The woman's head was instantly withdrawn, and one could see nothing save a slight movement of the sprays of roses, heliotropes, and pinks.

"You do not answer me," remarked Gilbert.

"My dear doctor, do you recollect what I said to the queen when she gave me her hand to kiss? 'Madame, by this kiss the monarchy is saved.' I took a heavy burden upon myself that day, especially if they abandon me, as they have done up to the present time. Still, I must not fail in my undertaking. Don't censure the suicide of which you spoke, doctor; it may be the only honourable way out of the difficulty."

Two days afterwards Mirabeau took a lease of the Château du Marais.

CHAPTER XX.

LE CHAMP DE MARS.

WE have already endeavoured to make our reader comprehend what an indissoluble bond of federation the people of France had formed, and what effect this federation had produced upon Europe.

Europe began to understand that a new era was dawning, and that some day she too must belong to an immense federation of citizens, — a single gigantic brotherhood.

Mirabeau had been a strong advocate of this grand gathering of the French people which was about to take place; and when the king expressed his fears as to the result, he had replied that if there was any salvation for royalty in France, it must be sought, not in Paris, but in the provinces.

He realised, too, that there was another great advantage to be derived from such a gathering, — the king would see his people, and the people would see their king; besides, when the entire population of France, represented by three hundred thousand delegates, shouted “Long live the nation!” and clasped hands over the ruins of the Bastile, courtiers could no longer insist that Paris, instigated by a handful of agitators, demanded privileges which the rest of the country felt no disposition to claim.

Mirabeau relied upon the good sense of the king, as well as upon the spirit of loyalty which still pervaded the hearts of most of the French people, and argued that this novel meeting would result in a sacred alliance which no spirit of intrigue would ever have the power to break.

When this idea of a general convention was first broached to the Assembly by the mayor and common council of

Paris, it created a great sensation. The Royalists declared that to encourage such a gathering would be to risk another fourteenth of July on a colossal scale, directed, not against the Bastille this time, but against royalty itself.

The Jacobins, on the other hand, knowing how strong a hold Louis XVI. still retained upon the masses, were no better pleased with the project than were their political opponents. There was no way of checking this popular movement, however, which had had no parallel since the eleventh century, when all Europe aroused itself to recapture the Holy Sepulchre; and the two movements were not so foreign to each other as one might suppose, inasmuch as the first tree of liberty was planted upon Calvary.

The Assembly endeavoured to make the gathering less formidable by prolonging discussion until it should be too late for delegates from remote parts of the kingdom to reach Paris. Besides, the expenses were to be defrayed by the different sections of the country; and, as the enemies of the convention were perfectly well aware, there were provinces so poor that it would be an absolute impossibility for them to defray a half or even a quarter part of the expenses of their delegates: consequently these deputies would not be able to reach Paris, to say nothing of getting home again.

But the opponents of the movement had not taken into consideration the intense enthusiasm of the public, or that spirit of co-operation which causes the rich to give twice, — once for themselves, and once for their poorer neighbours — or that spirit of hospitality that prompted every one along the road to exclaim: "Our doors are open to our brothers! Come, pilgrims, to the grand festival. You will find fathers and mothers and wives ready and eager to offer the same hospitality their sons and husbands are enjoying in other homes."

And by whom were these pilgrims of liberty led? By aged men; by soldiers who had fought in the Seven Years War; by men who had fought at Fontenoy; by miners

bearing upon their brows the sign of the iron rule of ancient France; by mariners who had conquered the Indies under Bussy and Dupleix, and had had their prize wrested from them under Lally Tolendal. Veterans of fourscore years made daily journeys of twenty-five or thirty miles a day on foot in order to reach Paris in time; and they were in time. As they were about to lie down and sleep the sleep of eternity, the strength of their youth was miraculously restored, and they mounted on wings like eagles.

Their country was beckoning to them with one hand, while with the other she pointed to the banner of hope, — to the roseate light of the new day which was to brighten the pathway of their children and children's children.

They sang one song, — these pilgrims gathering from the north and south and east and west, from Alsace, Brittany, Provence, and Normandy. Who taught them this song no one knows. The angel of the Revolution, perhaps, dropping music from his mighty wings as he passed over France. The song was the famous "*Ça ira*," — not the Terror song of '93, when hope was changed into wild despair and a frenzied longing for revenge, and France sweat great drops of blood. The song was not a death-chant then, but an inspiring melody, — a canticle of hope.

For the reception of these five hundred thousand delegates an immense arena was needed, as well as a huge amphitheatre capable of accommodating a million spectators. The Champ de Mars was selected for the arena; the heights of Passy and of Chaillot for the amphitheatre.

As the Champ de Mars was perfectly flat, it was necessary to convert it into a gigantic valley by digging out the earth in the middle and piling it up on two sides.

Fifteen thousand labourers, men of the sort who are eternally complaining of their futile search for work, praying under their breath all the while that they may not find it, — fifteen thousand such labourers were set to work with spades and pickaxes and hoes, by the city of Paris, to transform this plain into a valley, flanked by a

huge amphitheatre. But three weeks remained for the accomplishment of this Titanic task, and at the end of three days it was evident that these men would not complete it in as many months.

Then occurred a sort of miracle, by which one could measure the enthusiasm of the Parisians. This colossal task, which thousands of labourers could not or would not accomplish, was undertaken by the entire populace. The very day it became noised about that the Champ de Mars would not be ready for the festival of the fourteenth of July, one hundred thousand men arose in their might, and, with that confidence which is as much a part of the popular will as of the will of God Himself, said, "*It shall be ready.*"

Deputies from these hundred thousand citizens waited upon the mayor, and it was decided that the volunteers should work at night, in order not to interfere with those who worked during the day.

That same evening a cannon-shot announced that the day's work was ended and the night's work about to begin; and, almost simultaneously with the boom of the cannon, a mighty host appeared, invading the Champ de Mars from all four sides, — from Grenelle, the Seine, Gros Caillou, and Paris.

Each workman was provided with some implement, — a hoe, shovel, wheelbarrow, or pickaxe; others rolled casks of wine along to the music of violins, guitars, drums, and fifes.

People of all sorts and conditions, as well as of all ages and both sexes, mingled in the crowd, — citizens, soldiers, priests, monks, actresses, fine ladies, market-women, sisters of charity, together with everybody who could handle a pickaxe, trundle a barrow, or drive a waggon. Children carrying torches marched on ahead; bands followed, playing upon all sorts of instruments; and, resounding above all this hubbub, one heard the "*Ça ira*" sung by an immense choir of one hundred thousand voices.

Among the most indefatigable workers were two men who wore their uniforms as delegates to the great Federation.

One was a man about forty years of age, with robust and muscular limbs, but a gloomy face. He never sang, and rarely spoke. The other was a young fellow not far from twenty, with a frank, smiling countenance, big blue eyes, white teeth, and fair hair. He lifted enormous weights with his large hands, and pushed waggons and handcarts briskly about, singing cheerily all the while. He watched his companion closely out of one corner of his eye, and occasionally addressed a few words to him, to which the elder man made little or no response, however. Once he brought him a glass of wine, but it was waved aside; so the younger man shrugged his shoulders and returned to his place, where he did the work of ten men, and sang like twenty.

These two men were delegates from the new department of Aisne, about ten leagues from Paris; hearing that strong arms were needed, they had hastened to offer their services.

These two men were Billot and Pitou.

And now let us see what was taking place at Villers-Cotterets while these men were rendering such efficient aid amid this host of labourers.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH ONE DISCOVERS WHAT HAD BECOME OF CATHERINE, BUT NOT WHAT WILL BECOME OF HER.

ABOUT eleven o'clock on the night of the fifth of July, Doctor Raynal was aroused from slumber by three loud raps on his door.

When the doctor was summoned in the night, he was in the habit of going to the door himself, in order that there might be no unnecessary delay; so he sprang out of bed, slipped on his dressing-gown, stuck his feet into his slippers, and hastened downstairs.

But brisk as were the doctor's movements, the time of waiting must have seemed long to the nocturnal visitor, for he began to rap again.

On opening the door, the doctor recognised the lackey who had come once before to conduct him to Isidore de Charny.

"So here you are again, my friend!" exclaimed the physician. "Well, if your master has got into trouble again, all I have to say is that he had better take care of himself. It is n't well for a man to venture out much in a locality where it seems to rain bullets."

"It is not on my master's account I have come this time, though the case is just as urgent. Finish dressing. Here is a horse, and you are wanted as soon as possible."

In five minutes the worthy doctor was dressed and in the saddle; but instead of turning to the left on leaving the house, as on the previous occasion, the lackey led the way in exactly the opposite direction from Boursonnes, and the pair soon found themselves in such a dense part of the forest that it was very difficult to make their way through it on horseback.

Suddenly a man sprang out from behind a tree.

"Is it you, doctor?" he asked.

The doctor, ignorant at first of the speaker's intentions, had reined in his horse; but now, recognising the Vicomte de Charny, he promptly replied,—

"Yes, it is I. Where on earth are you taking me to, monsieur?"

"You will soon see," responded Isidore. "I must ask you to dismount and follow me."

"Ah, ha! I think I understand. It is a case of confinement, I judge."

Isidore grasped the worthy physician's hand.

"Yes, doctor; and you must promise me to keep the matter a profound secret," he exclaimed. "You will, won't you?"

But the doctor only shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "Don't worry yourself; I've been here before."

"Come this way," said Isidore; and the two men were soon lost to view in the shadow of the giant birches, through whose tremulous foliage they could only now and then perceive the glimmer of a star.

Presently the doctor caught sight of the Clouise Rock.

"Oh, ho!" he exclaimed, "so it is to Father Clouis' hut we are bound, I see!"

"Not exactly, but very near it."

Walking around to the other side of the immense rock, he led the doctor to the door of a small brick building so close to the gamekeeper's cottage that any one would have supposed that the good man had been building an addition to his abode.

A single glance at the interior would have undeceived one, however.

A pretty paper covered the walls, and the soft curtains harmonised with the paper. Between the two windows was a handsome mirror, and beneath it stood a dressing-table provided with all sorts of toilet utensils. There were two arm-chairs in the room, a small sofa, and a tiny

bookcase; but the good doctor's glance did not even rest an instant upon all this. He saw only the woman on the bed, and went straight to her relief.

On seeing the doctor, Catherine hid her face in her hands, but could not repress her sobs or conceal her tears.

Isidore approached and called her by name. She threw herself in his arms.

"Doctor," said the young man, "to you I confide the honour and life of one who is now my mistress, but who, I hope, will some day be my wife."

"You are kind indeed, my dear Isidore, to say such things to me; but you know only too well how impossible it is for a poor girl like me ever to become a viscountess. I am none the less grateful to you, though. You know I shall need strength, and you are trying to give it to me. Have no fears, I shall have courage; and the first and greatest proof of it I can give is to show you my uncovered face, my dear doctor, and offer you my hand."

And she extended her hand to Doctor Raynal.

A pain more violent than any she had before experienced made her clench her hand just as it touched the doctor's, and that worthy man made a sign to Isidore, who perceived that the critical moment had come.

Throwing himself on his knees by Catherine's bedside, he whispered, —

"Catherine, my darling, I ought to remain here to sustain and encourage you, but I fear my strength would fail me; still, if you desire it —"

Catherine put her arm round Isidore's neck.

"Go," she whispered; "go! I thank you for loving me so much that you cannot bear to see me suffer."

Isidore pressed his lips to hers, shook Doctor Raynal's hand once again, and rushed from the room.

For two long hours he wandered about, like those ghosts of whom Dante speaks, who could not pause an instant, or, if they did, were instantly driven on again by a demon with an iron trident. After each more or less extended

circuit, he invariably returned to that door, on the other side of which the awful mystery of childbirth was in progress; but almost immediately a cry uttered by Catherine would reach him, piercing his heart like one of the demon's iron prongs, and compelling him to resume his wanderings, only to return again and undergo the same harrowing experience.

At last he heard the doctor's voice, and a much feebler and sweeter voice, calling to him in the darkness. With two bounds he reached the door, which was open this time, and upon the threshold the good doctor stood awaiting him with a child in his arms.

"Alas! Alas, Isidore! now I am doubly thine," exclaimed Catherine, — "as thy mistress, and as the mother of thy child."

A week later, on the night of the 13th of July, at the same hour, the door again opened, and two men emerged, carrying a woman and a babe on a litter, escorted by a young man on horseback. On reaching the highway, they found a berlin drawn by three horses awaiting them, in which the mother and infant were placed with the utmost care.

The young man then dismounted, threw his bridle to a servant, to whom he also gave some instructions, and then entered the vehicle, after which the horses started off at a brisk trot in the direction of Paris.

Before his departure the young man had given Father Clouis a purse filled with gold, and the young woman had left a letter addressed to Pitou.

The rapid recovery of the mother, and the excellent constitution of the infant — which, by the way, was a boy — had convinced Doctor Raynal that the journey to Paris could be made with perfect safety.

God, who up to a certain time seems to watch over those whom He subsequently seems to abandon, had permitted Catherine's confinement to take place in the absence of Billot, who was still ignorant of his daughter's place of

retreat, and of Pitou, who had not even suspected her condition.

About five o'clock the next morning the vehicle reached the Porte St. Denis, but could not cross the boulevard, by reason of the blockade occasioned by the celebration.

Catherine ventured to put her head outside the hood, but instantly withdrew it, uttering a faint cry, and hiding her face in Isidore's bosom; for the first persons her eyes fell upon among the federal delegates were Billot and Pitou.

CHAPTER XXII.

JULY 14, 1790.

THANKS to the co-operation of all Paris, the work of transforming an immense plain into a valley was completed on the night of the thirteenth of July, and many of the labourers slept there, in order to secure places for the next day.

There was a remarkable display of patriotism and disinterestedness in the city; for the innkeepers met, and unanimously decided to lower their prices instead of raising them. The journalists, too, proposed a sort of compact between the members of their craft, and, renouncing all competition and jealousy, promised to indulge only in that emulation which conduces to the public good.

Several days prior to the festival the Assembly, at the instigation of Montmorency and Lafayette, abolished hereditary titles of nobility, — which, by the way, were zealously defended by the Abbé Maury, the son of a village cobbler.

The influence of Mirabeau made itself strongly felt in these days. Thanks to this powerful champion, the court had gained many warm adherents. The Assembly, too, had voted the king a civil list, or allowance, of twenty-five million francs, and an allowance of four millions to the queen.

This liberality richly repaid them for the two hundred and eight thousand francs spent in defraying the indebtedness of their eloquent defender, and for the six thousand francs which he was to receive from the Crown every month.

It seemed, too, that Mirabeau had not been deceived in regard to the state of feeling that prevailed in the provinces. The federal delegates were enthusiastic admirers of the National Assembly, but their feeling for the king was one of positive adoration. They lifted their hats to Monsieur Bailly, and shouted, "Long live the nation!" but they reverently bowed the knee before Louis XVI., and laid their swords at his feet, crying, "Long live the king!" But unfortunately the king was not very romantic or chivalrous, and responded to this enthusiasm but clumsily. Unfortunately, too, the queen was too arrogant to rightly appreciate these pledges of devotion; besides, the poor woman had a deep sorrow gnawing at her heart. This was caused by the absence of Charny, who could certainly have returned if he had liked, but who had remained with the Marquis de Bouillé at Metz, though her Majesty knew nothing whatever concerning his whereabouts. If she could but have heard him whisper, "Marie, my feelings are unchanged! Antoinette, I love you!" it would have given her a thousand times more pleasure than all these acclamations and protestations of devotion.

One might have supposed that this fourteenth of July was not aware that it was to witness a stupendous and magnificent spectacle, for it dawned with a sky veiled in clouds, and with the wind moaning and the rain falling; but some people laugh at anything, even at a storm on *fête-days*.

As early as five o'clock in the morning the boulevards were thronged with National Guards and federal delegates, all drenched with rain and dying of hunger, but laughing and singing all the same.

Though they could not save their guests from the rain, the Parisians invented a plan to relieve them of their hunger by lowering hams, loaves of bread, and bottles of wine from the windows. In all the streets through which the procession marched it was the same.

Meanwhile, one hundred and fifty thousand persons had

seated themselves on the hillocks overlooking the Champ de Mars, and one hundred and fifty thousand more stood behind them. As for the amphitheatres of Chaillot and Passy, they were thronged with spectators innumerable.

When the federal battalions entered the field, shouts of enthusiasm, and perhaps also of astonishment at the superb sight that met their gaze, burst from every lip.

In fact, no such spectacle had ever before greeted the eye of man.

In a fortnight the Champ de Mars had been transformed, as if by enchantment, from a plain into a valley a league in circumference.

In the middle of it stood the Patriot Altar, which was reached by four stairways corresponding with the four sides of the obelisk that surmounted it.

At each corner swung an immense censer filled with burning incense, and upon each side of the monument was an inscription announcing that the French nation was free, and inviting other nations to share this freedom.

Oh, the joy of our forefathers at this sight! It was so profound, so intense, that its echoes resound up to this very day.

And yet the heavens were discoursing, like one of the oracles of old, in heavy torrents of rain, gusts of wind, and threatening clouds, prophetic all of 1793, 1814, and 1815. There were also occasional sunbursts through the gloom, — symbols of 1830 and 1848.

Stands had been erected in front of the buildings belonging to the military school. These stands, hung with gay bunting and canopied with tricoloured flags, were reserved for the queen, the court, and the National Assembly.

Two thrones exactly alike, and only a few feet apart, had been erected for the king and for the president of the Assembly.

The king, appointed the supreme head of the French National Guard, for that day only, transferred his command to Lafayette, who was therefore the generalissimo

of six millions of men. His fortunes had reached their culminating point. Like those fantastic nocturnal apparitions which exceed all human proportions, he had grown inordinately, only to dissolve into thin air and vanish; but during this great festival everything was real, or seemed to be.

Two of the chief personages present were soon to be the victims of obloquy and disgrace, — the king, whose head would soon fall from his shoulders; and the general, whose white steed would soon carry him into exile.

The long procession of federal delegates entered the arena first, dividing into two lines, in order to embrace the entire circuit of the arena; behind this advance guard of twenty-five thousand men came the electors of Paris, the city officials, and finally the National Assembly; and behind them more delegates, and numerous military organisations.

Each department carried its distinctive banner; but these local banners were enveloped, surrounded, and nationalised, as it were, by a grand girdle of tricoloured banners which signified country and fraternity to the eyes and hearts of the people.

As the president of the Assembly ascended to his arm-chair, the king ascended to his also, and the queen took her seat in the tribune.

Alas, poor queen! her retinue was limited in number; for many of her friends had taken fright and deserted her. Perhaps, though, if they had known that the king had secured twenty-five million francs for his civil list, and the queen an allowance of four millions, some of the cowardly deserters would have returned.

As for the one person her eyes vainly sought, she knew but too well that neither gold nor power would ever again draw him to her side. In his absence her eyes longed for the face of some devoted friend; so she inquired for Isidore, and wondered why all the defenders of the Crown were not at their posts, since royalty had so few partisans in that great crowd.

If anybody had told her that Isidore de Charny was tenderly conducting an humble peasant girl to a modest house at Bellevue, who knows but this proud daughter of the Cæsars would not have been more than willing to renounce her throne and crown, and to become the daughter of an obscure farmer, — to be once more loved by Olivier as Catherine was loved by his brother Isidore!

Above the noise of five hundred drums and two thousand musical instruments were heard shouts of "Long live the king! Long live the nation!" Then there was a mighty silence, and the king, like the president of the National Assembly, took his seat.

Two hundred priests attired in white albs then advanced towards the altar, led by Talleyrand, the patron saint of all perjurers, past, present, and future.

He limped up the steps leading to the altar, a Mephistopheles awaiting the Faust who was to appear on the thirteenth Vendémiaire. A mass said by the Bishop of Autun! In mentioning the other evil omens, we had forgotten that.

Just then the storm burst forth with redoubled violence. One might almost have supposed Heaven was protesting against this unworthy priest who was about to desecrate this most holy sacrament, and offer as a tabernacle for our Lord a heart filled with the blackest treachery and deceit.

When the mass was over, Talleyrand descended a few steps and blessed the national standard and the flags of the eighty-three departments.

Then the ceremony of taking the national oath began.

Lafayette dismounted from his horse, ascended the steps leading to the altar, drew his sword, placed the point upon the Bible, and said, — for he took the oath in the name of the National Guards throughout the kingdom, —

"We swear to be ever faithful to the nation, to the laws, and to the king, and to maintain, with all the power that in us lies, the Constitution as framed by the National Assembly and accepted by the king; to protect the safety

of life and property, the dissemination of grain and other articles of food, and the receipt of the public revenues, and to live united in the indissoluble bonds of fraternity with all our fellow countrymen."

There was a profound silence while this oath was taken; but it was no sooner concluded than a hundred cannon thundered forth their approval.

Then the president of the Assembly arose in his turn, and all the members gathered around him as he said, clearly and impressively, —

"I swear to be faithful to the nation, to the laws, and to the king, and to zealously maintain the Constitution framed by the National Assembly and accepted by the king."

He had hardly completed the oath before the flames again belched forth, and the roar of artillery echoed and re-echoed to the farthest boundaries of France.

Then it was the king's turn. He arose. Listen, each and every one, to the oath which he breaks in his secret heart even while he is uttering it.

Have a care, sire! The clouds are breaking, the sun is shining out. The sun is God's eye; God is gazing at you.

"I, king of the French, swear to employ all the power conferred upon me by the Constitution in the maintenance of the Constitution formed by the National Assembly and accepted by me."

Ah, sire, sire! why, even on this occasion, did you prefer not to swear upon the altar?

False or sincere, this oath elicited no less flame and thunder than the other two. The cannon roared as vociferously as they had roared for Lafayette and the president of the Assembly, and a third time the artillery gave this ominous warning to the king of France: "Have a care, sire; all France is astir! Have a care, for France is resolved to be free!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

DANCING HERE.

It was an hour of great rejoicing with the multitude. For an instant Mirabeau forgot the queen, and Billot even forgot Catherine.

The king departed amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the crowd. The members of the Assembly returned to their hall accompanied by the same imposing *cortège* as on their arrival.

As for the flag presented by the veterans to the city of Paris, it was decided that it should be suspended from the ceiling of the Assembly Chamber as a symbol to future legislators of the dawn of the new and glorious epoch which had just been inaugurated, and as a reminder to the troops that they must be submissive to the Crown and the Assembly conjointly, and that they could not be employed without the mutual consent of both powers.

Night came on. The festival of the morning had been held on the Champ de Mars; that of the evening was held at the Bastile.

Eighty-three trees, as many as there were departments in the kingdom, represented the eight former towers of the edifice upon whose foundation they were planted; rows of lights were suspended from tree to tree. In the centre stood a tall flag-pole with a banner with the word "Liberty" inscribed upon it. Near the moat, in a grave which had been left open purposely, were the chains, instruments of torture, and gratings of the Bastile, together with that famous *bas-relief* from the old clock representing slaves in chains. The subterranean dungeons, which had absorbed

so many tears and smothered so many groans, had also been left open; but if a person, attracted by the music that resounded amidst the trees, found his way to what had once been the inner courtyard, he found there a brilliantly lighted ball-room, above the entrance to which one read these words, which were surely the realisation of Cagliostro's prediction:—

DANCING HERE.

At one of the thousand tables set up under the improvised forest—which represented the ancient fortress almost as well as Palloy's model—two men were recruiting their strength, exhausted by a long day of marching and counter-marching.

They had before them a huge sausage, a four-pound loaf, and two bottles of wine. The younger man wore the uniform of a captain in the National Guards, the other the uniform of a federal delegate.

"By my faith!" said the younger man, draining his glass, "it's a fine thing to eat when one is hungry, and drink when one is thirsty. Are you neither hungry nor thirsty, Father Billot?"

"I hunger and thirst for but one thing, now."

"And what is that?"

"I'll tell you, friend Pitou, when the hour for my banquet comes."

Pitou detected no covert meaning in Billot's response; he knew that Billot had eaten but little that day, and, in fact, ever since his departure from Villers-Cotterets, notwithstanding his five days, or rather nights, of arduous labour on the Champ de Mars. But Pitou knew that even the slightest indisposition frequently deprives the most robust men of their appetite.

So it was not Billot's abstinence that worried Pitou, for every one is at liberty to eat or not, as one pleases. Besides, the less Billot ate, the more there was left for Pitou. What perplexed and annoyed him most was the farmer's silence.

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Now, when Pitou ate in company with others, he dearly loved to talk. He had noticed, too, that conversation is a great aid to digestion; and this fact had impressed itself so deeply on his mind that when he ate alone he always sang.

The reader must not suppose for a moment that Pitou was in a melancholy frame of mind. Quite the contrary. For some time past, his life at Haramont had been unusually pleasant. As we know, Pitou loved Catherine, or, rather, he *adored* her; and the word in this connection is to be taken literally. How is it with the Italian or Spaniard who adores the Madonna? To see her, to kneel before her, to pray to her, — that is all he asks.

Sometimes the worthy fellow experienced a slight feeling of jealousy when he brought Catherine one of Isidore's letters from the post, or carried back one of hers, addressed to Isidore; but, take it all in all, his situation was incomparably better than when he returned to the farm after his first visit to Paris, when Catherine, seeing in him only an enemy of nobles and aristocrats, had shown him the door, telling him there was no work at the farm for such as he.

Ignorant of Catherine's condition, Pitou saw no reason why this pleasant state of things should not continue indefinitely; so it was with deep regret that he left Haramont. His superior rank, however, obliged him to set an example of zeal; so he took an affectionate leave of Catherine, commending her to Father Clouis' care, and promising to return as soon as possible.

Shortly after he reached Paris he called upon Doctor Gilbert to render an account of the manner in which the twenty-five louis had been expended; and Doctor Gilbert gave him twenty-five louis more, to be devoted, not to the equipment of the Haramont Guards this time, but to Pitou's own individual use.

Pitou accepted the money simply and ingenuously. Whatever Monsieur Gilbert — who was little less than a god in Pitou's eyes — saw fit to give, it was perfectly right

for him to accept, exactly as he accepted the rain or sunshine Jehovah saw fit to send.

As the honest fellow was about to take leave, Gilbert looked up at him and said, —

“I have an idea that Billot has a good deal that he wants to say to me. While I am talking with him, would you like to pay Sebastian a visit?”

“Yes, indeed; I’ve been wanting to ask permission dreadfully, but didn’t dare.”

Gilbert reflected a moment; then he took up a pen and wrote a few lines, which he sealed, and addressed to his son. “Here, Pitou,” he remarked, “take a cab and go and see Sebastian. After he reads what I have written, he will probably want to pay a visit. In that case, I am sure you will be kind enough to take him where he wishes to go, and wait for him outside. He may keep you waiting an hour or so; but, knowing how good-natured you are, I feel sure the knowledge that you are doing me a service will console you.”

“You need have no fears on that score; besides, I’ll buy some bread on the way, and if I get tired of waiting, I can eat.”

“A very good idea,” responded Gilbert, smiling. “Only remember it is not well for man to live by bread alone, but to drink as well as eat.”

“Then I’ll buy a chunk of hogshead cheese and a bottle of wine as well as the bread.”

“Bravo!” cried Gilbert, laughing.

So Pitou ran down and hired a cab, and was driven to the college of Louis le Grand, where he found Sebastian walking in the garden. After embracing him affectionately, Pitou gave the lad his father’s letter.

“Did my father tell you you were to take me somewhere?” he asked, after perusing the missive.

“Yes, if you desire to go.”

“And I do very much; so, in order that we may lose no time, you had better go and ask permission of the abbé, while I go and dress. I will meet you in the courtyard.”

Pitou consented very readily, for the idea of presenting himself before the principal as a federal delegate, and therefore entitled to due consideration, pleased him not a little.

By the time Pitou came out of the superintendent's office, Sebastian had descended the stairs leading to it.

"Here I am!" he exclaimed. "Let us start at once."

Sebastian was no longer a child, but a handsome youth of sixteen, with laughing blue eyes and a face framed in thick masses of wavy chestnut hair.

When they reached the carriage, which was waiting for them at the gate, Sebastian ordered the coachman to drive to number nine Rue Coq-Héron, the first gateway after passing the Rue Coquillière.

This address had no significance whatever to Pitou, so he entered the carriage behind Sebastian without making any comment; but as they passed a baker's he shouted to the driver to stop, and, jumping out, ran into the shop and purchased a two-pound loaf.

A little further on he stopped the vehicle again at a wine-shop, and again at a butcher's shop, laying in a fresh stock of provisions in each establishment.

"Now drive on to the Rue Coq-Héron as fast as you please," he shouted to the coachman; "I've got all I want."

As they neared the house, Sebastian manifested the utmost excitement. He even jumped up and put his head out of the window and shouted, "Go ahead, driver! hurry up!" — though it must be admitted this adjuration did not affect the rate of speed a particle.

But at last the cab reached the Rue-Coq Héron, and stopped in front of number nine.

Without waiting for the coachman, Sebastian opened the door, gave Pitou a last rousing hug, jumped to the ground, rang sharply, and asked to see Madame de Charny; but before the porter had time to answer, he rushed past him towards the pavilion.

The concierge, seeing he was such a handsome, well-

dressed youth, made no attempt to stop him, but contented himself with fastening the gate; but at the expiration of about five minutes, during which Pitou had attacked his hogshead cheese, uncorked his bottle of wine, and made vigorous inroads upon his loaf, the concierge opened the carriage door, hat in hand, and addressed these words to Pitou, — which he had to repeat twice, however.

“The Comtesse de Charny begs Captain Pitou will do her the favour to come in, instead of waiting for Monsieur Sebastian in the cab.”

The words had to be repeated twice, as we have previously remarked, before Pitou could grasp their meaning; but as a repetition effectually prevented any misunderstanding on his part, he was compelled to reluctantly restore his cheese to the paper in which it had been wrapped, and prop up his bottle of wine in the corner behind the cushions, in order to prevent its contents from being spilled.

Then he followed the porter; but great was his astonishment when he beheld Sebastian seated beside a beautiful woman, who pressed him fondly to her as she extended her other hand to Pitou and said, “You have conferred such a great and unexpected pleasure upon me by bringing Sebastian to see me, Monsieur Pitou, that I wish to thank you in person.”

Pitou stared wildly, and stammered and blushed; but he did not take the hand the beautiful stranger so graciously offered him.

“Take her hand and kiss it,” cried Sebastian. “My mother gives you permission.”

“*Your mother?*” cried Pitou.

Sebastian nodded affirmatively.

“Yes, his *mother*,” replied Andrée, her face radiant; “his mother, who has not seen her boy for nine long months; his mother, who never saw him but once before, but who, in the hope that you will bring him to see her again, reveals her secret to you, though this secret would make a great deal of trouble if it should become known.”

When any one appealed to Pitou's feelings or his loyalty, there was never any doubt as to the result.

"Oh, madame!" he exclaimed, seizing her hand and kissing it, "you need have no fears; your secret is safe here;" and, drawing himself up, he placed his hand upon his heart with an air of dignity that became him well.

"And now, Monsieur Pitou, my son tells me you have not lunched," continued the countess; "so will you not do me the favour to step into the dining-room while I talk with Sebastian? You shall be served at once, and thus make up for lost time."

In a few minutes this promise was indeed fulfilled. Two savoury cutlets, a cold fowl, and a jar of preserves were placed upon the table, beside a bottle of claret, a Venetian goblet of exquisite fineness, and a pile of dainty China plates.

Despite the elegance of the table appointments, we dare not say that Pitou did not think longingly of his two-pound loaf and his chunk of hogshead cheese.

As he was cutting up the fowl, after having despatched the cutlets, the dining-room door opened, and a young gentleman entered, as if with the intention of passing through the room into the parlour.

Pitou looked up just as the young gentleman looked down, and the two, recognising each other, uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Ange Pitou!" cried one.

"Monsieur Isidore!" cried the other.

Pitou rose to his feet, his heart throbbing violently; for the sight of this young nobleman recalled the bitterest hours he had ever experienced. As for Isidore, the sight of Pitou reminded him of nothing save the obligations Catherine had told him she owed to the worthy fellow; so he walked straight up to him and said, most cordially, —

"Ah, Monsieur Pitou, is it you? I am delighted to meet you, and to have an opportunity to thank you for the services you have rendered me."

"Monsieur, I rendered those services to Mademoiselle Catherine, and to her alone," said Pitou, in a firm voice, though he was trembling in every limb.

"Yes; up to the time you first discovered that I loved her. After that, the service was rendered to me as well; and as you must have been put to considerable expense in transmitting our letters, and building that little house at Clouise Rock —"

And Isidore put his hand in his pocket.

But Pitou checked him.

"Monsieur," he said, with that dignity which so astonished one at times, "I give my services when it pleases me to do so, and I ask no pay for them. I repeat that those services were rendered to Mademoiselle Catherine. She is my friend, and if she thinks she owes me anything, she will settle her indebtedness herself; but you, monsieur, owe me nothing, for whatever I may have done, was done for Mademoiselle Catherine, and not for you. So you must offer me nothing."

The words, and especially the tone in which they were uttered, impressed Isidore deeply.

"Indeed, I do owe you something, Monsieur Pitou," he said, bowing slightly, "and I have something to offer you as well. I owe you my sincere thanks, and I offer you my hand. I hope you will do me the honour to accept both."

Isidore's reply was so noble, and his manner so gracious, that Pitou was conquered, and he held out his hand.

Just as the tips of their fingers touched, the countess appeared on the threshold of the door leading into the parlour.

"You asked to see me, Monsieur Isidore," she said. "Here I am."

Isidore bowed to Pitou and followed the countess into the parlour.

He was about to close the door; but Andrée took hold of it, and it consequently remained half open, so that Pitou could hear all that was said in the parlour. He noticed,

too, that the door at the other end of the parlour had also been left open, so that Sebastian, too, could hear the conversation between the countess and the viscount.

"You asked for me, monsieur," said Andrée. "May I inquire to what I am indebted for the honour of this visit?"

"I heard from my brother Olivier yesterday, madame; and in this, as in previous letters, he requested me to lay his remembrances at your feet. He is still unable to say when he shall return, but he would be glad to be assured of your well-being, either by means of a letter sent through me, or merely a message."

"I have not been able to answer the letter with which Monsieur de Charny honoured me when he went away, as I had no idea of his whereabouts; but I will gladly avail myself of your kind offer to send him my compliments as a respectful and submissive wife. If you will kindly take a letter to Monsieur de Charny, I will have it ready to-morrow."

"Write the letter by all means, madame," replied Isidore; "but instead of coming for it to-morrow, I will call in five or six days. I have a short journey to make. Just how long I shall be absent I cannot say, but as soon as I return, I will call to pay my respects and receive your commission."

Isidore bowed to the countess, who returned the salutation, and who must have shown him out by another door, as he did not pass through the dining-room where Pitou, having made away with the fowl, was attacking the jar of sweetmeats.

The jar was as dry as the bottle, from which Pitou had long since squeezed the last drop, before the countess reappeared with Sebastian.

It was difficult to recognise the grave Comtesse de Charny in this young mother, whose eyes sparkled with joy, and upon whose lips a smile of such ineffable tenderness played. Even her pale cheeks had taken on a roseate hue which

surprised Andrée herself; for maternal love — that crowning joy of a woman's existence — had re-entered her heart during the hours spent with her son.

Again she covered Sebastian's face with kisses, before restoring him to Pitou, whose rough fist she pressed warmly with her soft white hands.

As for Sebastian, he embraced his mother with the same ardour he manifested in everything he did; for his love had cooled only temporarily by reason of the imprudent remark the countess had made during their conversation in regard to Gilbert nearly a year before. During his secluded life at school the recollection of his beautiful tender mother had been ever present in his mind; so when Gilbert's letter granting him permission to spend an hour or two with her reached him, it gratified the most ardent desire of his heart.

Gilbert had deferred this visit so long purely from motives of delicacy; for he knew if he conducted Sebastian to the countess himself, his presence would deprive her of much of the happiness she would otherwise have felt in meeting her son, while if he intrusted the matter to any one save kind-hearted, innocent Pitou, he would endanger a secret that was not entirely his own.

Pitou took leave of the countess without asking any questions, or even casting a curious glance at her surroundings, and led Sebastian — who turned again and again to exchange one more farewell kiss with his mother — to the carriage, where he found the cheese safe in its wrappings, and the bottle of wine still ensconced in its corner.

In the evening he began work at the Champ de Mars, where he spent the next night and several subsequent nights. He received many compliments from Monsieur Maillard, who recognised him, as well as from Monsieur Bailly, to whom he made himself known. He also met Elie and Hullin, two men who had figured conspicuously in the taking of the Bastile, like himself, and beheld,

without the slightest envy, the medals they wore in their button-holes, though he and Billot had as much right to them as anybody in the world.

At last, when the momentous day came, he took his place in the ranks of delegates with Billot near the Porte St. Denis, and, it is needless to say, detached a ham, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of wine from the end of a like number of strings.

He approached the Patriot Altar and danced the *farandole*, with an actress from the opera on one side of him, and a Bernardine nun on the other. He also had the satisfaction of seeing himself represented by Lafayette in the oath-taking, which he considered a great honour. Afterwards, too, when Lafayette passed down the line on his white charger, Pitou had the additional gratification of receiving one out of the three or four thousand hand-shakes the popular general distributed *en route*.

Then he and Billot went to see the games and illuminations and fireworks on the Champs Elysées; after which they decided to end up the day at the Bastille, where Pitou was fortunate enough to secure a vacant table, and immediately ordered two loaves of bread, a sausage, and two bottles of wine.

When Isidore announced his contemplated absence of several days, Pitou did not suspect that he intended spending this time at Villers-Cotterets. Nor did he know that six days afterwards Catherine had given birth to a boy; that she had left Clouise Rock by night, one week afterwards; and that she had arrived in Paris on the very morning of the *fête*, and caught a glimpse of Pitou and Billot near the Porte St. Denis.

Not knowing any of these things, there was nothing to make him sad except Billot's sadness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE APPOINTMENT.

As we remarked at the beginning of the preceding chapter, Pitou resolved to be as gay as possible himself, in the hope of dispelling Billot's melancholy and making him talk, — if that was a possible thing.

"Say, Father Billot," he began, "who would ever have supposed, when you picked me up on Ermonville Heath and we started off post-haste to Paris, that you and I should have played such a prominent part in the taking of the Bastile?"

"No one," responded the farmer, laconically.

"The deuce!" Pitou said to himself; "the talking is likely to be all on one side, it seems to me. Well, here goes for another trial!"

"And even after we took the Bastile, Farmer Billot, who would ever have supposed that one year from that time I should be a captain and you a federal delegate, and that we two should be supping on the site of the old fortress? Who would ever have believed it, I say?"

"Nobody," responded Billot, still more gruffly.

"And now I think of it, it was just one year ago to-day that you and I entered the city hall, and you took Monsieur de Flesselles by the collar and made him hand over some powder to you, while I stood guard at the door. A few minutes later it was through a gate which stood just there that you entered the Bastile, after making Monsieur Maillard write the famous note which I was to read to the people in case you did not come out again. Right over there, where that pile of old chains and handcuffs lies, is

where you first met Monsieur Delaunay. Poor man! I can see him now in his linen coat and three-cornered hat, his red ribbon and sword-cane. There is another who has gone to join Flesselles."

Billot evinced no disposition to respond; nevertheless Pitou persevered.

"Just think of it," he continued: "Monsieur Delaunay showed you through the whole fortress, from top to bottom, and you studied it and measured it,—those walls thirty feet thick at the base, and fifteen at the top. And after you had examined it all carefully, and got safely out again, you said to us, as if it were merely a matter of climbing a hayloft, 'Friends, let us take the Bastile!' And take it we did, that same famous old Bastile, — took it so effectually that to-day we are eating sausage and drinking Burgundy on the very spot where it once stood."

Still the farmer was silent; but Pitou went bravely on.

"What a strange affair it was! When I think of that piece of work, — the shouts, the deafening noise — But talking of noise, what is going on over there? Say, Father Billot, something must be up; everybody's running. Come, let's go and see, like everybody else! Come, Father Billot, come!"

The commotion was caused by a man who had the rare gift of creating a *furor* wherever he went.

Cries of "Long live Mirabeau!" went up from a thousand vigorous throats, — the throats of men slow to change their opinions about leaders after they have once fairly adopted them.

It was indeed Mirabeau, who, with a closely veiled woman on his arm, had come to visit the Bastile. Any one but Mirabeau would have been alarmed at finding such a crowd at his heels, especially as some low yet threatening exclamations could be heard amid the plaudits of the crowd, — such exclamations as that which greeted the chariot of the Roman conqueror when some one called out to him, "Cæsar, forget not that thou art mortal!"

But this stormy soul seemed to be in its element amid thunder and lightning and raging tempest. He passed on through the shouting, excited throng with a smiling face, calm gaze, and commanding gesture, still holding on his arm the unknown woman, who seemed to tremble before the breath of her companion's popularity.

Pitou jumped upon a chair, and from the chair to a table, and, hoisting his three-cornered hat upon the point of his sword, shouted, "Long live Mirabeau!" as lustily as the rest.

Billot evinced no signs either of sympathy or antipathy, but simply crossed his arms upon his stalwart breast and murmured, "They say he betrays the people."

"Bah! that was said about all the great men of antiquity, from Aristides to Cicero," retorted Pitou; and he cheered on even more lustily, until the great orator disappeared from sight in the crowd.

"Well, I'm glad I've seen Mirabeau," he exclaimed, jumping down from his perch. "Let's go back now and finish our second bottle, and get the best of that sausage;" and he led the farmer back to the table, where the remains of their repast still awaited them. They found a third chair drawn up to their table, however, and a man seated in it.

Pitou looked at Billot, who was gazing intently at the intruder.

This was a sort of fraternity day, so a certain amount of license was permissible; but Pitou, who was still hungry, thought this stranger was taking rather too great a liberty, especially as he made no apology for his intrusion, but merely surveyed the farmer and his companion with a humorous expression which seemed to be habitual to him.

Billot was evidently not in a mood to tolerate this scrutiny; but before he had time to utter a protest, the stranger made a peculiar sign, to which Billot, after an instant's hesitation, responded.

After this sign made by the Unknown, and returned by

Billot, the farmer and Pitou resumed their seats. The stranger was the first to speak.

"Brothers, you do not know me, but I know you," he remarked.

Billot looked searchingly at the Unknown, but Pitou, who was more outspoken, exclaimed, —

"Nonsense! Do you really know us?"

"I know you, Captain Pitou, and you, Farmer Billot."

"You've hit it, certainly," responded Pitou.

"But why so gloomy, Billot?" inquired the stranger. "Is it because they have forgotten to hang a fourteenth of July medal in your button-hole, and pay you such honours as have been paid to Maillard, Elie, and Hullin? Or is it because, on returning to your farm in October, you found your granaries empty and your fields bare?"

"I am rich; what does the loss of one year's harvest matter to me?"

The Unknown looked Billot full in the face.

"Then is it because your daughter Catherine —"

"Silence!" thundered the farmer. "Don't speak of that."

"And why not, if I speak in order to assist you in gaining your revenge?"

"That makes a difference," said Billot, smiling and turning pale simultaneously.

Pitou forgot to eat or drink, and gazed at the man as one might gaze upon some wonderful magician.

"And how do you hope to accomplish your object? tell me! By merely killing one individual, as you have been trying to do?"

Billot became livid, and Pitou felt a cold shiver run down his back.

"Or by pursuing all of his caste?"

"By hunting them all down; for the crime of one is the crime of all. As Doctor Gilbert said, when I told him, 'Poor Billot! What has happened to you has happened to a hundred thousand fathers. How would these young

noblemen amuse themselves, if they could not lead the daughters of common people astray, or the old ones, if they could not eat at the king's expense?' Doctor Gilbert knows what he is talking about."

"Did Gilbert say that to you?"

"You know him, then?"

"I know everybody, — as I know you, Billot, farmer of Pisseleu; as I know you, Pitou, captain of the Haramont National Guards; as I know the Vicomte de Charny, seigneur of Boursonnes; as I know Catherine —"

"I have forbidden you to mention her name."

"And why?"

"Because there is no longer any Catherine."

"What has become of her?"

"She is dead."

"No, she is not dead," interrupted Pitou. Doubtless he might have added, "for I know where she is," but Billot repeated, in a voice that admitted of no contradiction, "She is dead, I say."

Pitou bowed his head; he understood. To others, Catherine might be alive; but to her father, she was dead.

"Ah!" said the Unknown, "if I were Diogenes, I should extinguish my lantern, for I think I have at last found an honest man." Then he arose, and, offering his hand to Billot, said, "Come, brother, and take a turn with me while this worthy fellow finishes his bottle and eats his sausage. To insure his being a patient waiter, I will see that they bring him something more to eat."

Sure enough, the stranger and Billot had hardly disappeared before another sausage, a second loaf, and a third bottle graced Pitou's table.

Though he did not understand what was going on, Pitou felt surprised and anxious, and astonishment and anxiety, like every other emotion, made Pitou's stomach feel very hollow. He was consequently irresistibly impelled to do honour to the viands set before him, and he was thus

engaged when Billot returned, quietly and alone, but with a satisfied look on his face, and resumed his seat at the table opposite Pitou.

“Well, what’s the news?” asked the latter.

“You will leave for home to-morrow, my boy.”

“And you?”

“*I!* I shall remain here,” replied Billot.

The Secret Lodge.

Photogravure by Goupil et Cie., from Drawing by
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Dessiné par F. Goussier

Photographie Goussier & Co

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LODGE.

ONE week after the events just related, Billot, no longer attired in the uniform of a federate, but in the garb of a well-to-do farmer, might have been seen wending his way up the Rue Grenelle to the Rue Plâtrière.

Here he scrutinised each house closely until he came to a low door surmounted by the three letters, L.P.D., traced in red chalk, so that they could be rubbed out on the morrow.

This recessed door strongly resembled the entrance to a cave; for from it you descended several steps into a dark and gloomy passage.

A faint light gleamed at the end of this narrow passageway, and near it sat a man reading, or pretending to read, a newspaper.

At the sound of Billot's footsteps this man arose, placed one finger upon his breast, and awaited the farmer's approach.

Billot held out the corresponding finger, by way of response, and then pressed it upon his lips.

This was probably the countersign the mysterious door-keeper expected; for he pushed open a door on his right, — a door that was invisible when shut, — and disclosed to Billot's view a steep narrow staircase, leading down apparently into the very bowels of the earth.

This time the farmer counted seventeen steps before he found himself a few feet from a doorway over which a heavy curtain was suspended. Lifting this curtain, he found himself in a large circular apartment, in which about fifty persons were already assembled.

As in Rousseau's time, the walls of this subterranean chamber were hung with red and white tapestry, in which the compass, square, and level figured conspicuously.

A single lamp hanging from the vaulted ceiling lighted the middle of the room; the rest of the apartment was veiled in gloom.

A platform, reached by four steps, was provided for speakers and candidates, and upon this platform, at the side nearest the wall, stood a desk, and also an arm-chair, for the president's use.

In a few moments the hall became so full that it was wellnigh impossible to move about. All sorts and conditions of men, from the peasant to the prince, were represented; but each person entered alone, as Billot had done, and each person wore under his coat or overcoat a masonic apron, if he was simply a Mason, or the scarf of the Enlightened Ones, if he had been initiated into the higher ranks of the order.

In fact, only three of those present were without the latter insignia, — that is, wore merely the masonic apron. One was Billot; another, a young man about twenty-two years of age; and the third, a man about forty-two, who evidently belonged to the very highest rank of society.

A few seconds after the entrance of this last person mentioned, a secret door opened, and the president appeared, wearing both the insignia of the Grand Orient and the Sublime Kophta.

Billot uttered a faint cry of astonishment; for this presiding officer, before whom all heads bowed, was no other than the federal delegate Billot had met at the Bastile.

This official slowly ascended the platform, then, turning to the assemblage, said, —

“My brothers, there are two things to be done to-day. I have to initiate three new candidates, and also to give an account of my work from the day I began it up to this present time. My task becomes more difficult hourly; and you have a right to know whether I continue to be worthy

of your confidence, and I to know whether I am still honoured with it. Now, let all but the chiefs of the order leave the hall, while we proceed to accept or reject the three candidates who have come before us. When this matter has been settled, all the members may return; for it is in the presence of all that I desire to report my proceedings and receive your censure or commendation, as the case may be."

The crowd silently dispersed through another door, which, as it opened, disclosed to view a huge vaulted cellar similar to the crypt of an ancient basilica; and like a procession of phantoms the crowd silently disappeared within these arches, which were but dimly lighted by an occasional copper lamp.

Only three men remained in the hall. These were the three candidates, who gazed at each other with evident curiosity, for not until then had they known who were to be the heroes of the occasion.

Just then the door by which the president had entered was again opened, and six masked men came in and stationed themselves, three on the right and three on the left side of the presiding officer's arm-chair.

"Number Two and Number Three will withdraw for a while. Only the Supreme Chiefs are permitted to know the secrets of the acceptance or rejection of a brother Mason who desires to enter the order of the Enlightened Ones," said the president.

The young man and the aristocratic-looking middle-aged man stepped out into the same passage by which they had entered the hall, leaving Billot quite alone.

"Approach," said the chairman. "What is your name?"

"François Billot."

"Where didst thou first see the light?"

"Among the friends of Truth Lodge at Soissons."

"How long hast thou been a member of the order?"

"Seven years."

"And why dost thou desire to take a higher degree?"

"Because I have been told that this degree is one step nearer the perfect light."

"What sentiments prompt thee?"

"A love of equality and a hatred of the mighty."

"What is there to vouch for thy love of equality and hatred of the mighty?"

"The word of a man who has never uttered an untruth."

"What inspired this love of equality in thy breast?"

"The inferior station in which I was born."

"And what aroused this hatred of the mighty?"

"That is my secret; but a secret known to you as well."

"Wilt thou walk, and endeavour to persuade every one around thee to walk, in the way of equality?"

"Yes."

"According to thy very best ability wilt thou endeavour to overcome every obstacle to the freedom of France and to the emancipation of the world?"

"I will."

The president turned to the six masked men and said, "Brothers, this man speaks the truth; I myself invited him to become one of us. A great sorrow binds him to our cause; he has done much to aid the Revolution already, and can do much more. I willingly vouch for him, as well as for his past, his present, and his future."

"Let him be admitted," said six voices simultaneously.

"Dost thou hear?" asked the president. "Art thou ready to take the oath?"

"Dictate the oath, and I will repeat it."

The chairman lifted his hand, and said slowly and solemnly, —

"In the name of the Crucified One, swear to break all carnal ties which now bind thee to father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife, kindred, sweetheart, kings, benefactors, or any other being or beings to whom thou mayest have promised obedience, gratitude, or service."

Billot repeated the words in a voice even more firm than that of the presiding officer.

"And now, from this hour, thou art released from any so-called oath made to the country and its laws. Swear, also, to reveal to thy chief whatever thou hast seen or done, learned or suspected, or that thou shalt see, hear, learn, read, or suspect."

"I swear it."

"Swear to respect and honour poison, sword, and fire, as the prompt and necessary agents for purging the globe of all who endeavour to debase truth."

"I swear."

"Swear to avoid Naples, Rome, Spain, and every country under the ban. Swear, too, not to yield to the temptation to reveal anything thou shalt see or hear at our meetings; for lightning is not quicker to strike than the invisible knife to find the traitor, no matter where he may be hidden."

"I swear."

"And now, be thou enlightened, in the name of the Father the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

A brother concealed in the gloom opened the door leading into the crypt, and the president motioned Billot to join those of whom he was now one through the terrible oath he had just taken.

"Number Two," called out the president, in a loud voice.

The curtain which concealed the door leading from the outer hall was pushed aside, and the young man dressed in black entered.

He was about twenty-two years of age, and might have passed for a woman, so fair and delicate was his complexion; but an enormous and closely fitting cravat — which he alone wore at that epoch — might have suggested that the whiteness and transparency of his skin were due to some disease; especially as his neck seemed to be disproportionately small. His forehead was low, and the top of his head too flat; so his hair, though it did not exceed the fashionable length, reached nearly to his eyes in front, and nearly to his shoulders behind.

"What is thy name among the profane?" inquired the chairman.

"Antoine Saint-Just."

"Where didst thou first see the light?"

"In the lodge at Laon."

"Thy age?"

"Five years," and the candidate made a sign to show the degree he had attained in Freemasonry.

"Hast thou any sponsors?"

"Two."

"Who are they?"

"Robespierre the elder and Robespierre the younger."

"Why dost thou wish to advance another degree and be received among us?"

"Because it is the nature of man to aspire to the highest, and because on the heights the air is purer and the light more brilliant."

"Hast thou a model?"

"Yes, — the man of nature, the immortal Rousseau."

"What is thy dearest ambition in life?"

"To lead France on to freedom, and to emancipate the world."

"What wouldst thou give to achieve this?"

"My life, which is all I possess now, having already given my fortune."

"Wilt thou walk, and persuade those about thee to walk, in this path according to thy best knowledge and ability?"

"I will."

"Wilt thou do thy best to overthrow each and every obstacle that stands in the way?"

"I will."

"Art thou free from all entanglements? and if not, wilt thou break them?"

"I am free."

The president turned to the six masked men and said, —

"Have you heard, brethren?"

"Yes," the six men responded, as with one accord.

"Has he spoken the truth?"

"Yes."

"Is it your opinion that he should be admitted?"

"Yes," they answered, for the third and last time.

"Art thou ready to take the oath?" asked the president.

"I am ready."

The president repeated the oath he had just administered to Billot, word for word, and to each interrogation Saint-Just responded emphatically, "I swear."

The president only waited for the door to close upon Saint-Just's retreating form before summoning Number Three.

As we have remarked before, Number Three was a man about forty or forty-two years of age, with a florid, rather pimpled face, but endowed, in spite of these signs of vulgarity, with an unmistakably aristocratic air, in which a slight tendency to Anglomania was clearly apparent. His attire, too, though elegant, was characterised by considerable of the severity of style which was becoming fashionable in France at that time, and which was probably due in no slight degree to that country's relations with America.

"Approach."

The candidate obeyed with a rather vacillating and uneven tread.

"What is thy name among the profane?"

"Louis Philippe Joseph, Duke of Orleans."

"What is thy name among the elect?"

"Equality."

"Where didst thou first see the light?"

"In the lodge of Free Men, here in Paris."

"Why dost thou desire to be received among us?"

"Having always lived among the great, I desire now to live among *men*."

"Hast thou sponsors?"

"Two, — disgust and hatred."

"For what special object dost thou desire to enter upon the path before thee?"

"A desire for revenge prompts me."

"Revenge upon whom?"

"Upon a man who has misjudged me, and upon a woman who has humiliated me."

"What art thou willing to sacrifice to accomplish this object?"

"My fortune, my very life if need be, and more than that,—my honour."

"Art thou free from all entanglements? or if thou hast made any pledge conflicting with the obligations thou art about to assume, wilt thou break it?"

"Every bond has been broken since yesterday."

"Do you hear, my brothers? and do you know this man who offers himself as a co-labourer with us?"

"Yes."

"Knowing him, do you approve of his admission to our ranks?"

"Yes; but he must take the oath."

"Knowest thou the oath that thou must take?" said the president, addressing the candidate this time.

"No; but repeat it, and I will take it, whatsoever it may be."

"It is a terrible oath, especially for thee."

"No more terrible than the outrages to which I have been subjected."

"Nevertheless, it is so terrible that we declare thee free to depart, if, after having heard it, thou feelest even at this last moment that thou mayest not be able to keep it in all its rigour."

"Repeat the oath."

The president fixed his eyes searchingly on the candidate; then, as if to prepare him gradually, he reversed the usual order of the clauses, beginning with the second instead of with the first.

"Swear to honour steel, fire, and poison as the sure, prompt, and necessary agents for purging the globe of those who seek to debase truth or wrest it from us."

"I swear," responded the prince, firmly.

"Swear to break all carnal ties which still bind thee to father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife, sweetheart, kindred, friends, benefactors, kings, or any other human being to whom thou mayest have promised fidelity, obedience, gratitude, or service."

The duke was silent for a moment. Big drops of cold sweat could be seen standing on his brow.

"I have repeated the oath to thee," said the president.

But instead of simply responding, "I swear," as in the previous instance, the duke, as if to deprive himself of any possible loophole of escape afterwards, repeated the entire oath in a gloomy, even sullen tone: "I swear to break all carnal ties which still bind me to father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife, sweetheart, kindred, friends, benefactors, kings, or any other human being to whom I may have promised fidelity, obedience, gratitude, or service."

The president exchanged another glance with the masked men, whose eyes could be seen flashing through their masks as they gazed at one another; then, turning to the prince, he said, —

"Louis Philippe Joseph, from this hour thou art released from any oath thou mayest have made to king or country in the past. Only do not forget, if thou shouldest betray us, the lightning is not more swift to strike than the inevitable and invisible knife will be to find thy heart, wheresoever thou mayest be hidden. Now, be thou enlightened, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Again the door leading into the crypt opened, and the duke passed his hand over his brow and drew a long breath, like a man relieved of an intolerable burden.

"Ah!" he muttered, as he stepped into the crypt, "now I shall indeed be avenged."

CHAPTER XXVI.

RENDERING AN ACCOUNT.

THE chairman and his six masked companions interchanged a few words in a low tone; then Cagliostro said aloud:

"Let all the brethren enter; I am ready to give the report I promised."

The door was immediately opened, and all the members of the society re-entered the hall. The door had hardly closed behind the last member before Cagliostro, like a man who appreciated the value of time, and was unwilling to lose a second of it, raised his hand, and said, —

"Brethren, it is quite possible that some among you attended a meeting which took place exactly twenty years ago, in a mountain cave two miles from Danenfels, on the banks of the Rhine. If any among you were present at that time, will these venerable defenders of our great cause raise their hands and say so?"

Five or six hands were raised, and five or six voices exclaimed, "I was there."

"That is all that is necessary," remarked the speaker. "The others are dead, or scattered over the face of the earth, doing the work of our brotherhood. Twenty years ago this work was hardly begun. The light of the new day, now so dazzling in its brightness, was then scarcely discernible in the eastern sky.

"Since that time we have seen various European communities struggle valiantly for liberty; among them we may mention Rome, Venice, Florence, Switzerland, Genoa, Pisa, and Lucca. These cities of the South, where the flowers open so quickly and fruits ripen so early, have

made a series of experiments in the establishment of republics, only two or three of which have survived until the present day.

“But all these republics were tainted with some inherent sin. Some were too aristocratic in their nature, some too oligarchical, some too despotic. Genoa, for example, one of the few which still survive, is thoroughly impregnated with aristocratic ideas. True, all her citizens are equals within her walls, but they consider themselves noblemen everywhere else. The Swiss are the most thoroughly democratic in their institutions; but their small cantons, hidden away in the mountains, are of little assistance in establishing a precedent for the human race.

“The great necessity now is a great and powerful country, which will not only struggle for freedom herself, but impart a desire for freedom to other lands.

“I turn to God, the Creator of all things, the Source of all true progress, for enlightenment, and I see His finger pointing to France; for we must not forget that God himself, through the occupants of the papal chair, has called France His eldest daughter, thereby indicating her right in a great crisis to offer herself on the cross for humanity’s sake, as our Lord Himself did. France, too, having tried all forms of despotic government, — feudal, monarchical, and aristocratic, — seemed likely to prove most amenable to our influence; so we decided that France should be the first country liberated.

“Cast a glance at the France of twenty years ago, and you will realise the audacity of such an undertaking. Twenty years ago, even in the weak hands of Louis XV., France was still the France of Louis XIV., — that is to say, a kingdom where all the rights belonged to the nobles, and all the privileges to the rich. At the head of the state was a man who had the power to raise men to wealth or reduce them to poverty, to make them happy or miserable, to imprison them or set them free, to allow them to live or to condemn them to death.

"This man had three grandsons; and fate so willed it that Louis XVI., his successor, was not only designated for that position by primogeniture, but by the voice of the people as well, — if the people could be said to have any voice at that time. He was reputed to be good, moral, just, unselfish, and well educated. In order to put an end to the disastrous wars caused by the unfortunate succession of Charles II., the wife chosen for this prince was the daughter of Maria Theresa.

"The question was, Who should enter this lion's den? What Christian Theseus, guided by the torch of faith, should endeavour to find his way through the labyrinth and confront the royal Minotaur? Upon whom was this task to devolve? *Upon me*, I answered; and when some ardent souls asked how long a time would be required for the first part of my work, which I divided into three different periods, I asked for twenty years. They exclaimed at this. Do you understand why? For twenty centuries these men had been slaves or serfs, and they cried out in dismay when I asked for twenty years to convert them into free men."

Cagliostro glanced around at his auditors, among whom his last words had excited many ironical smiles, then he continued, —

"Finally, the brethren granted me the twenty years I asked for, and I gave them our notable device, *Lilia pedibus destrue*,¹ and set to work.

"I came to France through the shadow of triumphal arches. The road from Strasburg to Paris was a pathway of laurel and roses. Everybody was shouting, 'Long live the dauphiness, the future queen of France!'

"And now, brethren, see what has been accomplished in twenty years.

"The Parliaments have been dissolved; Louis XV., once

¹ "Trample the lilies under foot;" the idea involved being the destruction of the French monarchy, whose emblem — the fleur-de-lis — always figured upon the banners, shields, and arms of the Bourbon dynasty.

called the Well Beloved, is dead: he died hated and despised.

"The queen, barren for seven years, at last gave birth to children whose legitimacy is strongly disputed. At the time of the dauphin's birth her character was openly assailed; and as a wife she was disgraced by the affair of the Diamond Necklace.

"The present king, bearing the title of Louis the Long-Desired, having the kingdom to sustain, but being utterly incompetent for the task, rushed from one Utopian scheme into another until he reached bankruptcy, and from minister to minister until he reached Calonne.

"The Assembly of Notables was convened, and insisted upon the recognition of the States-General,—the rank and file of the community. The States-General, elected by the people, resolved themselves into the National Assembly, and the nobility and clergy are dominated in it by the members of the Third Estate.

"The Bastile is demolished, and the foreign hirelings have been driven from Paris to Versailles.

"The fourth of August showed the aristocrats that their doom was sealed; the fifth and sixth of October showed the king and queen that the monarchy was a thing of the past.

"The fourteenth of July, in the year following, showed the world that France was almost a unit.

"The other royal princes have made themselves equally unpopular by emigration, and Monsieur, too, by the trial and conviction of Favras.

"The Constitution has been enthusiastically adopted, the president of the National Assembly occupying a throne equal in every respect to that of the king.

"Brothers, has not France become what I predicted, — a sun to illumine the world?"

"Yes, yes!" cried each and every auditor.

"And now, my brethren, do you think the work so far advanced that it can be left to take care of itself? The

Constitution has been accepted; but do you believe we can trust the king's oath?"

"No, no!" shouted every voice.

"Then we must enter upon the second stage of the great work we have undertaken. In your opinion, as in mine, I am glad to say, the Federation of 1790 is not the end, but merely a breathing-place on the road. The court has already set to work to bring about a counter-revolution. Let us gird our loins for the fray also, and let us have our lights trimmed and burning.

"There will doubtless be many anxious hours, and many moments of misgiving; and often the light which illumines our path will seem to die out altogether. The guiding hand, too, will seem to forsake us, and more than once our cause will appear to be irretrievably lost. Many will even ask themselves if they are not on the wrong track, and if they may not be engaged in an evil work. No, my brethren, no! I tell you, No; and I wish the word might sound eternally in your ears as a trumpet-blast in time of triumph, — a tocsin in the midst of defeat. No; a thousand times no, I say!

"Popular leaders have a sacred mission, which must be accomplished at all hazards. Clouds and darkness often hide the Lord, who is our guide, — and who moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform, — from our eyes; and we are almost forced to believe that He has deserted us. More than once, in the days that are to come, circumstances will place us in a most unfavourable light; our enemies will seem to triumph, and our fellow-citizens will prove ungrateful. Often a principle seems to suffer defeat, when, on the contrary, it is only retreating a moment, like a knight in a tournament who takes a step backward to place his lance at rest, and then rushes still more fiercely upon his opponent.

"Brothers, brothers! it is a beacon-light upon a high mountain towards which we are journeying, and scores of times catastrophes along the road will cause us to lose

sight of the flame, and to believe it extinguished. Then the faint-hearted will murmur, and complain, and halt, and say, 'We have no trusty guide; we are travelling in the dark.' But the strong will continue on their way, smiling and confident.

"Thus, by fighting and struggling and persevering, the world's chosen ones will at last reach the beacon whose light must some day illumine, not only France, but the whole world.

"Let us swear, then, brethren, not only for ourselves, but for our descendants, — for perchance the work may require the efforts of several generations, — let us swear not to desist in our endeavours until we have established throughout the earth Christ's sacred motto, — Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

Cagliostro's remarks were followed by a loud burst of applause; but a few words, uttered in a sharp, cutting voice, chilled the general enthusiasm like a dash of ice-cold water.

"Yes, we will pledge ourselves to do what you ask," said this sharp, rasping voice; "but first explain what these words mean to you, so that we, in turn, may be able to explain them."

Cagliostro's piercing eye fixed itself upon the pale face of the deputy from Arras, Robespierre.

"So be it," he responded. "Listen, Maximilian." Then, raising voice and hand at the same time, to rivet the attention of the crowd, he added, "Listen, one and all!"

A solemn silence fell upon the assembly as Cagliostro continued, —

"Yes, you have a right to ask a definition of these words from me, and I will give it.

"Let us begin with Liberty. First of all, brethren, do not mistake Liberty for Independence; for they are not even sisters, but, on the contrary, two rivals who hate each other. Nearly all races who live among the mountains

are independent; but I know of no nation, except the Swiss, which is really free. No one will deny that the Calabrians, Corsicans, and Scotch are independent; but no one can call them free. If the Calabrian's whims are interfered with, or the Corsican's honour, or the Scot's interest, he straightway resorts to violence, since he cannot have recourse to law, there being no such thing as real law among an oppressed people. He strikes, his enemy falls, and he feels that he is avenged. The mountain is near at hand to serve as an asylum, and he finds independence in caves, and dense forests, and beetling cliffs, — the independence of the fox, the antelope, and the eagle; but the fox, the antelope, and the eagle — indifferent and unmoved witnesses of the great drama of life — are animals, dependent upon instinct and created for solitude.

"The years went by, but these animals took no note of them. The arts and sciences flourished, but the eagle made no progress. Nations arose, matured, and declined, but the fox was conscious of none of these changes. And why? Simply because God has limited the mental capacity of these creatures to the instinct of self-preservation; whereas He has endowed man with the knowledge of good and evil, a horror of isolation, and a fondness for society.

"Liberty is not a primary substance, like gold; it is a flower, a fruit, a product, which requires cultivation to insure its development and growth.

"Liberty is the right every man possesses to labour for his own benefit, for his own interests, for his own satisfaction, welfare, and amusement, so long as he does not injure the interests of others. Liberty necessitates, however, the partial relinquishment of individual independence in order to create, as it were, a fund of general liberty, of which each person may enjoy an equal share in turn.

"Liberty is even more than this. It involves an obligation, publicly assumed, not to confine the accumulated enlightenment, progress, and privileges already won to a

certain class in a community, or to a certain race or nation, but to scatter them broadcast with a lavish hand. And there is no need to fear that this treasure will become exhausted; for Liberty has the divine characteristic of multiplying itself through its very prodigality.

"Thus you see that Liberty is a sort of celestial manna to which each individual has an equal right, and which the fortunate people upon whom it descends should freely share with all who ask for their portion of it.

"Such is Liberty, as I understand it. Now let us pass on to the word Equality.

"Brethren, I will not do you the injustice to suppose that any person among you is misled by this seductive word into believing in an equality of intellect, or even of matter. Nature herself has settled that question by placing the hyssop and the oak, the valley and the mountain, the lake and the ocean, and stupidity and genius, side by side. All the decrees in the world cannot lower Chimborazo or Mont Blanc a single cubit; nor could the decree of any legislative body extinguish the fire of genius which burns upon the brow of Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare. We must understand perfectly that the equality we refer to is simply a social and political equality. And now, my brethren, what is this Equality?

"Equality is the abolition of all hereditary privileges except those transmitted through a natural aptitude and ability. It insures free access to all employments, vocations, grades, and ranks. It means that rewards shall be bestowed upon merit, genius, and virtue, and not be regarded as the perquisite of a certain caste, family, or race.

"Thus the throne — that is, if such a thing as a throne is allowed to remain — will merely be an exalted position, accessible to the most worthy, while those of lesser worth will occupy secondary positions, but still according to their merit; and, provided their present acquirements are adequate, whether they be kings, ministers, councillors, generals, or judges, no one will care for their origin. Thus

royalty or judicial eminence, the monarch's throne or the president's chair, will no longer be the hereditary perquisite of a family, but be conferred by *election*. For counsel, for war, for judicial positions, it will no longer be a question of class privilege, but merely of *aptitude*. In the arts and sciences and in the realm of letters rank will no longer be determined by favour, partiality, and patronage, but by general agreement and generous rivalry. This is true social equality.

"In proportion with the increase of knowledge — and here let me say that, in my opinion, education should not only be gratuitous, but compulsory — the general standard would become more and more elevated. Instead of remaining with her feet in the mire, Equality should soar to the loftiest heights. A great nation like France should tolerate only a standard that elevates, not one that deteriorates. The equality which degrades is not the equality of a Titan, but that of a bandit.

"And now, brethren, we come to the third and last word of our motto, — Fraternity; a grand word if properly understood; a sublime word if properly defined. A man must, indeed, have a very imperfect understanding of the real meaning of this word who applies it merely to the inhabitants of a single village, the citizens of a single town, or the people of a single nation. Let us pity such narrow and ignorant minds, and teach them to shake off the leaden sandals of mediocrity, stretch their wings, and soar high above all such commonplace notions. When Satan tried to tempt Christ, he transported him to the top of a lofty mountain commanding a view of all the kingdoms of the earth, — not to a tower in Nazareth, from which he could see only a few Galilean villages. It is not the people of one city, or even of one kingdom, that should be united in the bonds of Fraternity, but the whole world.

"Brethren, the day will surely come when this word 'country,' which we now hold so sacred, and that other word 'nationality,' which we utter with equal reverence,

will vanish like those bits of stage scenery which are lowered only for a moment to allow the scene-shifters and machinists to prepare their infinite distances and extended horizons. Brethren, the day will come when those who have conquered earth and sea will conquer air and fire as well. The flaming coursers of the sky will be harnessed, not only to mind, but to matter, and the winds — which are to-day but the unruly couriers of the tempest — will become the docile and intelligent messengers of civilisation.

“Brethren, the day will come when — thanks to this terrestrial and aerial communication, which will render kings practically powerless — all the nations of the earth will understand that they are bound together in a solidarity of past trials; when people will understand that kings, who have put weapons with which to destroy one another into their hands, were urging them on, not to glory, as they claimed, but to fratricide, and that a full account must be rendered to posterity for each drop of blood drawn from the most insignificant member of the great human family.

“Then, brethren, you will see a magnificent panorama spread out before you. Every imaginary boundary will disappear; every artificial frontier will be laid low. Rivers will be no hindrance, mountains no obstacle. Nations will clasp hands across rivers, and upon the loftiest mountain-peak will be erected an altar, — the altar of Fraternity.

“Brethren, this, I tell you, is the true apostolic fraternity. Christ did not die to save the Jews alone, but to redeem all the nations of the earth. ‘Go and teach all nations,’ was His command. Do not make these three words, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, the motto of France alone. Inscribe them upon the banner of humanity, — a motto for the world.

“And now go forth, my brethren! Your task is a grand one, — so grand that however deep the rivers of blood and tears through which you are condemned to pass may prove,

your descendants will envy you the sacred mission intrusted to you. Be like the Crusaders of old, who did not pause even when they saw the bones of their fathers bleaching along the route.

“Courage, then, ye apostles of liberty! Courage, ye pilgrims! Courage, ye soldiers! Apostles, convert all men! Pilgrims, press on! Soldiers, fight the good fight!”

Cagliostro paused; but he had scarcely ceased speaking when a storm of applause burst forth. Three times the plaudits died away, only to be again renewed, echoing and re-echoing through the crypt like a subterranean tempest.

The six masked men bowed low before him, one after another, kissed his hand, and retired.

Then each brother bowed in turn before the platform from which this new apostle, another Peter the Hermit, had preached the “Crusade of Liberty,” and then passed out, each repeating the grim motto, *Lilia pedibus destrue*.

With the last brother’s departure the lamp went out, and Cagliostro was left alone in silence and darkness, like those gods of India into whose mysteries he claimed to have been initiated two thousand years before.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WOMEN AND FLOWERS.

SEVERAL months after the events just related, a carriage dashed up to the door of the Château du Marais about eight o'clock in the morning, and a gentleman, dressed entirely in black, alighted from it.

An old servant, who seemed to have been awaiting this person's arrival very impatiently, hastened forward to meet him.

"Ah, Doctor Gilbert, you have come at last!" he exclaimed.

"What is the matter with him, my poor Teisch?" inquired the doctor.

"Alas, monsieur, you will see," responded the valet.

As he spoke, he led the way into the billiard-room, where the lamps were still burning, and then through the dining-room, where a table covered with flowers, empty bottles, fruit, and pastry gave evidence of a supper prolonged far into the night.

Gilbert glanced sorrowfully at this scene of disorder, which showed how poorly his instructions had been obeyed; then, sighing, and shrugging his shoulders, he ascended the staircase which led up to Mirabeau's chamber on the floor above.

"Here is Doctor Gilbert, monsieur," said the valet, as he entered.

"The doctor!" exclaimed Mirabeau. "Why, it was n't necessary to send for him for a mere trifle like this!"

"Trifle!" murmured poor Teisch. "You can judge for yourself, monsieur."

"Nevertheless, I am very sorry they troubled you without consulting me," insisted Mirabeau.

"First of all, it never causes me any inconvenience to come to see you. You know I only attend a few personal friends, and I am always entirely at their service. Now let us see what the matter is. There must be no secrets from the faculty, understand. Teisch, pull up the curtains and open the windows."

This order being complied with, the sunlight penetrated to the farthest corner of Mirabeau's chamber, thus enabling the doctor to note the change which had taken place in the famous orator's appearance since he examined him a couple of months before.

"Ah!" exclaimed Gilbert, in spite of himself.

"Yes, I am very much changed, am I not?" responded Mirabeau. "I'll tell you how it happened. You know the question under consideration yesterday?"

"Yes; something connected with mines and mining, was it not?"

"Yes; but it is a question that is very imperfectly understood as yet. The interests of the owners and of the Government are not distinct enough; besides, my intimate friend De la Marek is deeply interested. In fact, half his income depends upon it. His purse, my dear doctor, has always been at my service, and I am consequently under many obligations to him; so I spoke, or rather I attacked the outposts five times. I put the enemy to rout the last time, though I was pretty well used up myself in the fray. On returning home, I wanted to celebrate my victory; so I invited a few friends to sup with me. We laughed and joked until three o'clock this morning, and then I went to bed. About five o'clock I was seized with terrible pains, and cried out like a fool. Teisch was frightened, and sent for you. Now you know just as much as I do. There's my pulse, and here's my tongue. I'm suffering the tortures of the damned. Pull me through if you can, and I'll promise not to meddle with such matters any more."

Gilbert was too skilful a practitioner not to realise the gravity of Mirabeau's condition without consulting either his tongue or his pulse. The sick man seemed to be in imminent danger of suffocating; his respiration was exceedingly laboured, and his face badly swollen by reason of the stagnation of blood in his lungs. His hands and feet, too, were cold, and the intense pain he was suffering extorted a groan from him every now and then, in spite of his heroism.

"You will pull through this time, my dear count," remarked Gilbert, drawing a case of instruments from his pocket, "but I did not get here any too soon."

"Are you going to bleed me, doctor?"

"At once."

"In the left arm or the right?"

"In neither; but in the foot. Meanwhile, Teisch must go to Argenteuil for mustard and cantharides, so that we may apply plasters. Take my cab, Teisch."

"The deuce! At that rate, I should say it was time you came," exclaimed Mirabeau.

Without replying, Gilbert immediately proceeded to bleed his patient; and very soon thick black blood began to ooze from the sufferer's foot. The relief was almost instantaneous.

"You are certainly a very clever man, doctor," exclaimed Mirabeau, breathing much more easily already.

"And you, count, are certainly a very foolish one, to endanger a life so valuable to France and to your friends, for a few moments of pleasure."

"Nonsense, my dear doctor; you exaggerate the regard France and my friends entertain for me," replied Mirabeau, smiling in a half ironical, half melancholy fashion.

"Great men are always complaining of the ingratitude of mankind in general, when they themselves are really the ingrates. Be seriously ill, and you will have all Paris under your windows to-morrow; die to-morrow, and you will have all France for pall-bearers."

"That is very consoling, I'm sure," responded Mirabeau, laughing.

"It is just because you can see the gratitude without risking your life that I tell you this. The truth is, you need a great demonstration to stimulate you. Let me take you back to Paris with me a couple of hours hence; then let me tell the first person I meet that you are ill, and you will see."

"Do you think I'm strong enough to be taken back to Paris?"

"Yes; this very day. How are you feeling now?"

"I am breathing much easier; my head is clearer, and the mist before my eyes is disappearing; but I am still suffering a good deal in my stomach."

"The plasters will relieve that, my dear count. The bleeding has done its work, and now the plasters must do theirs. Hold on, — here's Teisch now."

Teisch had brought the required remedies, and in about a quarter of an hour entire relief came, as the doctor had predicted.

"Now I'll give you an hour to rest, and then take you away with me," remarked Gilbert.

"Won't you permit me to remain here until evening, and make an appointment to meet you at my house on the Rue Chaussée d'Antin at eleven o'clock to-night?"

Gilbert looked at Mirabeau, and the latter could see that his physician had divined the cause of this desire on his part; so he added, —

"What else can I do, as I am expecting a visitor?"

"I saw the flowers on your table as I passed through the dining-room. It wasn't a mere friendly supper you gave last night."

"You know I can't do without flowers; they are one of my weaknesses."

"But I am not complaining of the flowers alone, count."

"But if the flowers are a necessity to me, I must abide by the consequences of that necessity, I suppose."

"Count, you are killing yourself."

"Confess, though, that it is at least a delightful death."

"I mean to keep close by you the entire day."

"But, doctor, I have given my word. You surely wouldn't ask me to break it."

"Will you be in Paris to-night?"

"I tell you I shall expect to meet you at my little house on the Rue Chaussée d'Antin to-night. Have you ever seen it? It's a purchase I've just made from Julie Talma's wife. I'm beginning to feel all right again now, doctor."

"In other words, you want me to be off. Very well; this is my day at the Tuileries."

"Ah, you will see the queen," said Mirabeau, his face darkening.

"Probably. Have you any message for her?"

"I couldn't take such a liberty. Don't even mention the fact that you have seen me."

"And why not?"

"Because she'll ask you if I have saved the monarchy, as I promised, and you'll have to say no," replied Mirabeau, smiling bitterly; "though it is more her fault than mine that I have failed."

"Don't you want me to tell her how you have been overworking yourself, and that your brave fight in the Assembly is killing you?"

"Yes, tell her that. Make me out much more ill than I am, please."

"And why?"

"Oh, never mind! Just do it for curiosity's sake, so that you'll have something interesting to tell me."

"All right."

"And you'll tell me what she says?"

"Her very words."

"Well, good-bye, doctor. I thank you a thousand times," said the count, offering his hand to Gilbert, whose searching glance seemed to embarrass him. "Now won't you prescribe for me before you go?"

"Take plenty of warm drinks, observe the simplest possible diet, and, above all —"

"Well?"

"Above all, no nurse under fifty years of age; do you understand?"

"Rather than not follow out your prescription, I'll take two of twenty-five years," responded Mirabeau, laughing.

At the door Gilbert met Teisch. The poor fellow's eyes were full of tears.

"Oh! why do you leave him, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Simply because he won't let me stay, my dear Teisch," Gilbert answered.

"And all on account of that woman who looks like the queen," muttered the old man. "A man of such genius, too, as everybody admits! Great heavens! how can he be such an ass?"

Gilbert seized the old man's arm, as if about to question him; then, saying to himself, "What am I doing? it is his secret, not mine," he stepped into his cab and was driven away.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHAT THE KING SAID, AND WHAT THE QUEEN SAID.

GILBERT scrupulously fulfilled the promise made to Mirabeau; but first he saw Camille Desmoulins, the incarnate spirit of the press of the day, and apprised him of Mirabeau's illness, which he represented as much more serious than it really was at that moment, but not more so than it would become if Mirabeau indulged in any fresh imprudence.

Then he repaired to the Tuileries, and communicated the intelligence to the king.

"Ah, indeed, poor fellow!" remarked the monarch. "Has he lost his appetite?"

"Yes, sire."

"Then he's in a bad way," said the king, and straightway began to talk of other matters.

On leaving the king, Gilbert went to see the queen, and repeated to her exactly what he had told the king.

The daughter of Maria Theresa knit her brows.

"Why did n't this malady attack him on the morning of the day he made that fine speech on the tricoloured flag?" she exclaimed. Then, as if repenting of having allowed this expression of animosity against the symbol of French nationality to escape her in Gilbert's presence, she added, "Still, it would be a great misfortune for France, and for ourselves as well, if this indisposition should prove serious."

"I believe I have already had the honour of informing your Majesty that it is more than an indisposition, it is a serious illness."

"Which I feel sure you will conquer, however."

"I shall do my best, madame, but I cannot answer for the result."

"I shall depend upon you, doctor, understand, to bring me news of Monsieur de Mirabeau," she remarked; then she, too, began to talk of other things.

That same evening, at the appointed hour, Gilbert presented himself at the door of the house Mirabeau had recently purchased in the city.

The count, who was half reclining upon a couch, was evidently expecting him; but as he had been kept waiting several minutes in the drawing-room, Gilbert cast a quick glance round the room, and as he did so his eye fell upon a cashmere scarf lying upon an arm-chair.

It was to divert the doctor's attention from this discovery, very possibly, that Mirabeau hastily exclaimed:

"Ah, it is you! I find that you have fulfilled a part of your promise already. All Paris knows that I am ill, and for two hours Teisch has been kept busy answering the inquiries of my friends, who want to know whether I am better, and perhaps of my enemies as well, who come to see whether I am not worse. So much for the first part of your promise. Have you kept the second part as faithfully?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know perfectly well. Have you been to the Tuileries?"

"Yes."

"Did you see the queen?"

"Yes."

"And the king?"

"Yes."

"And did you tell them they would soon be well rid of me?"

"I told them that you were quite ill."

"What did they say?"

"The king inquired whether you had lost your appetite."

"Poor man! On the day of his death he will say, like Leonidas, 'I sup with Pluto to-night.' And the queen?"

"The queen expressed great sympathy for you."

"In what terms?"

"Oh, in the very kindest terms."

"You gave me your word that you would repeat to me exactly what she said, word for word."

"I can't recall what she said, word for word."

"Doctor, you have n't forgotten a syllable of it."

"I assure you —"

"Recollect, I have your word."

"You are importunate."

"Precisely."

"Well, then, she said this malady should have overtaken you the morning you made your famous speech in defence of the tricoloured flag."

Gilbert wished to see what influence the queen really possessed over Mirabeau; and his curiosity was gratified, for the count sprang from his couch as if he had been brought in contact with an electric battery.

"Oh, the ingratitude of crowned heads!" he exclaimed. "That one speech, then, was enough to make them forget the king's civil list of twenty-five millions, and the queen's allowance of four millions. The woman does n't see that by that one move I regained the popularity I had lost on her account. She forgets, too, that during my presidency of the Jacobin Club—a presidency of three months which used up ten years of my life—I passed the law which restricted membership in the National Guards to actual citizens. Then an attack was made upon the king's aunts because they had left the country, and a law against emigration was proposed. I said, 'If you make such a law, I swear I'll never obey it;' and the bill was rejected unanimously. Then they called me dictator, and forced me to go upon the rostrum in a passion,—the worst thing an orator can do. I triumphed a second time, though,—but by attacking the Jacobins. Then the Jacobins—fools that they are!—swore to kill me,—Duport, Lameth, Barnave;—none of them see that by killing me they give the dic-

tatorship of their clique to Robespierre. Me — whom they should have guarded as the very apple of their eye — they voted down by a big majority; they made me drink the bitter cup to the dregs; they made me sweat drops of blood; they crowned me with thorns; yes, — crucified me. But happy is the man who, like Christ, undergoes all this, for humanity's sake.

"The tricoloured flag! — cannot the queen see it is their only refuge? that if they will publicly place themselves under its shadow they can be saved? But the queen doesn't care to be saved; she only wants to be avenged, and so turns a deaf ear to the only efficacious means, — moderation, justice, and feasibility. I wanted to save two things at once, — royalty and liberty. It was a thankless task, in which I was doomed to fight single-handed, it seems; and against what? If it had been against men, or even against lions and tigers, that would have been nothing; but to fight against the elements, against all the powers of nature, against the sea, against the rising waves, against the in-coming tide, — that is another thing. Yesterday the water came up to my ankles, to-day it reaches to my knees, to-morrow it will be up to my waist, and the next day over my head.

"Doctor, I may as well be frank with you, — I dreamed of being a successful arbitrator between the Revolution and the monarchy; I dreamed of gaining such an ascendancy as a man over the queen that I could influence her actions and save her. But the queen never really desired my aid. She only wanted to compromise me, make me unpopular, ruin me, render me powerless either for good or evil; so, doctor, what I had better do, as I remarked to you once before, is to die, — to lie down gracefully, like a gladiator of old, and surrender my throat to the knife."

"But, count, what would you say if the king or the queen should send to inquire about you to-morrow?"

"What!" exclaimed Mirabeau, half rising.

"I said the king — *or* the queen."

"She will not do it."

"But if she should?"

"You really think she will condescend so far?"

"I vouch for nothing. I am merely supposing a case."

"Then I'll wait until to-morrow night."

"What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say. If the queen sends to inquire for me by to-morrow night, then I'm in the wrong; if she does *not*, why then you are wrong, doctor, and I am right."

"So be it. Now, my dear Demosthenes, I want you to spend a quiet, peaceful night, and awake calm and refreshed."

"I will not leave this couch, doctor."

"Will you promise me that?"

"Upon my word of honour."

"Good!" said Gilbert, rising to go. "Get a good night's sleep, and I'll attend to the rest."

Mirabeau passed a comfortable night. The next morning he summoned Teisch early to open the windows and admit the fresh morning air, and the only thing that troubled the old servant was the feverish impatience and anxiety to which his master was evidently a prey.

He seemed hardly to believe Teisch when the latter told him it was not yet eight o'clock, and made Teisch bring him his watch, so that he could see for himself. Then he laid the watch on a table beside him.

Presently he said to the old man: "Teisch, I can trust you so implicitly that I want you to take Jean's place at the door to-day. You will say to all callers that I am better, but not able to see any one yet; but in case any messenger should come from the Tuileries, you are to bring him up to my room. Do you understand me? The messenger must not, on any account, go away without my having a conversation with him. You see, my good Teisch, that in sending you away from me I am only giving you another proof of my confidence."

At ten o'clock Mirabeau arose and dressed himself with unusual care. Then he seated himself in an arm-chair at a window which commanded a view of the street. Each time the knocker sounded or the bell rang, his anxious face might have been seen peering out from behind the partially raised curtain. Then the curtain would fall, to be again lifted at the next peal of the bell, or sound of the knocker, and so on, again and again.

About two o'clock Teisch came up, followed by a lackey.

Mirabeau's heart throbbed violently. The lackey wore no livery, and the thought at once occurred to Mirabeau that the queen had sent the messenger in this garb in order not to compromise herself in the eyes of the public.

"From Doctor Gilbert," said Teisch.

"Ah!" said Mirabeau, turning pale.

"As the boy came from Doctor Gilbert, and is the bearer of a letter for you, I thought it best to make an exception in his favour, monsieur."

"You did quite right."

Mirabeau opened the letter; it read as follows: —

"Let me know how you are. I shall be with you at eleven this evening. I hope you will tell me that I was right, and you were wrong."

"Tell your master you found me sitting up, and that I shall certainly expect him to-night."

"See that the lad has something before he goes away," he added, turning to Teisch.

Teisch made a sign to indicate that he understood, and took the messenger away.

Hour after hour passed, and the bell rang and the knocker was plied incessantly. Crowds gathered in the street in front of the house, and, being wrought up into a state of intense excitement by the alarming accounts in the newspapers, — accounts which were contradicted, however, by Teisch's encouraging reports, — compelled all

vehicles to turn into side streets, so as not to disturb the illustrious invalid.

About five o'clock Teisch again entered Mirabeau's chamber to inform him of this fact.

"I thought it possible you had some better news for me, my poor Teisch," remarked Mirabeau.

"What better news could you ask?" exclaimed the old servant, in surprise. "I did not suppose I could tell you anything that would please you better than this proof of the people's love for you."

"You are right, Teisch, and I am an ingrate indeed."

As soon as Teisch had left the room, Mirabeau opened the window, and, stepping out upon the balcony, waved his hand in token of gratitude to the worthy men below, who had constituted themselves the guardians of his slumbers.

They recognised him, and shouts of "Long live Mirabeau!" re-echoed from one end of the Rue Chaussée d'Antin to the other.

The evening wore away as the day had done, and Mirabeau's feverish impatience changed to bitter despondency.

At eleven o'clock precisely the door opened, and Teisch announced Doctor Gilbert, who entered smiling, but who became alarmed when he noted the expression on Mirabeau's face.

"Did no one come?" he asked hurriedly.

"From where?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean."

"No, I assure you I —"

"From her — from the palace — in behalf of the queen?"

"No one, my dear doctor, no one."

"Impossible!"

Mirabeau shrugged his shoulders. "What an innocent, credulous person you are, doctor!" he exclaimed. Then, seizing Gilbert's hand, he asked, "Shall I tell you what you've been doing to-day, doctor?"

"Go on."

"Yes, doctor, I can see and hear all that took place as plainly as if I had been there. You went to the Tuileries to-day at one o'clock; you asked to see the queen, and you did see her; you told her that my situation was alarming, to say the least, and suggested that it would be kind in her, both as a sovereign and as a woman, to send and inquire for me, even though she did it only for policy's sake. She discussed the matter with you, and your arguments seemed to convince her; for, as you were about to take leave, she promised you she would send and inquire for me. You left her much elated, trusting in the royal promise, and she, — she remained arrogant and haughty and bitter, smiling at your credulity; for you quite forgot that a royal promise means nothing whatever. Now, upon your word as an honest man," added Mirabeau, looking Gilbert full in the face, "was it not exactly as I have said?"

"Had you been there, my dear count, you could hardly have stated the case more accurately."

"Fools that they are!" exclaimed Mirabeau, bitterly; "they never seem to be able to do the right thing. The sight of a lackey in the royal livery entering my house to-day in full view of the crowd in front of my door and under my windows would have given the king and queen at least another year of popularity."

And, to his very great astonishment, Gilbert saw Mirabeau raise his hand quickly to his eyes and dash away a tear.

"How long is it since you have eaten anything?" asked the doctor.

"Not since two o'clock."

"In that case, you had better take a bath."

"A very good idea, doctor. Jean, a bath in my dressing-room at once."

Ten minutes afterwards, Mirabeau was taking a bath, and Teisch was showing the doctor out. The count remained in his bath until he heard the outer door of the house open and close; then he rang the bell violently.

"Jean, set a table in my room, and go and ask Madame Olivia if she will do me the favour to sup with me. And, above all, see that there are flowers, — plenty of flowers. I adore flowers," he added.

About four o'clock Doctor Gilbert was awakened by a loud peal of the door-bell.

"I am sure Mirabeau is worse!" he exclaimed, springing out of bed.

The doctor was right. After the supper had been served, and the table covered with flowers, Mirabeau ordered Teisch to go to bed, and dismissed Jean also. Then he fastened all the doors save that leading into the room of the woman Teisch called his evil genius.

Neither of the two servants went to bed, however, though the younger man fell asleep in his chair in the ante-chamber. Teisch was on the alert, however.

About a quarter of four a sharp blow was heard on the small table-bell, and both servants hastened to the room, but found the doors locked.

Happily, the idea of going to the unknown woman's apartment, and reaching their master's room through hers, occurred to them.

Lying back, half fainting, Mirabeau was holding the woman to prevent her from summoning assistance, while she, in her terror, was ringing the little table-bell with all her might, being unable to reach the bell-rope, which hung by the chimney. On seeing the servants, she implored them to release her; for Mirabeau was almost suffocating her in his convulsive writhings, and looked like Death itself dragging her down to the tomb.

By the united efforts of the servants, the arms of the death-stricken man were finally unloosed, and she retired, weeping, to her room.

Jean rushed off for the doctor, while Teisch devoted his whole attention to his master.

Gilbert did not take the time to have his horse harnessed, or even to call a cab, but, as the Rue Saint-Honoré was

not far from the Rue Chaussée d'Antin, he followed Jean, and in ten minutes they reached Mirabeau's house.

Teisch was waiting for them in the vestibule.

"What is the matter this time, my friend?" asked Gilbert.

"Ah, monsieur, that woman, and those accursed flowers!" faltered the old servant. "But go and see, doctor, go and see!"

As the doctor hastily mounted the stairs leading to Mirabeau's chamber, a door on the opposite side of the landing flew open, and a woman clad in a white dressing-gown rushed out and threw herself at the physician's feet.

"Oh, Gilbert, Gilbert! save him, in Heaven's name!" she cried frantically.

"Nicole!" exclaimed Gilbert. "Nicole, you wretch! is it possible it is you?"

"Save him! save him!" implored Nicole.

Gilbert paused, overwhelmed by a terrible suspicion; for the discovery was indeed a startling one.

"Beausire distributing pamphlets against him, and Nicole his mistress!" Gilbert muttered. "He is indeed lost, for I see Cagliostro's hand in all this."

And realising that there was not an instant to lose, he rushed into Mirabeau's room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"LONG LIVE MIRABEAU!"

It is not necessary to describe all the phases of this terrible illness minutely; suffice it to say that it was reported throughout the entire city that morning that there had been a relapse, — and a relapse in such a case meant death.

It became apparent now what an immense place one man could occupy in the heart of a nation. Paris was as deeply moved as when a general calamity threatened the community. All day long the street on which the count lived was closely guarded by men of the labouring class, so that the noise of passing vehicles should not disturb the invalid. Hour after hour the crowds under the window pleaded for news. The door was besieged by citizens of all conditions in life and representing every shade of political opinion, as if each party felt that it would sustain an irreparable loss in losing Mirabeau.

For twenty-four hours Gilbert did not leave the count for an instant; but on Wednesday evening the patient seemed so much more comfortable that the doctor consented to go into the next room and take a few hours' rest; but before doing so he gave orders that he should be called if any change for the worse occurred.

At daybreak he awoke. No one had disturbed him as yet; he arose with a heavy heart, for it did not seem possible to him that his patient's improvement should not be attended by some set-back.

In fact, when the doctor re-entered the sick-room Teisch told him, with tears in his eyes, that the count was much

worse, but that he had forbidden them to arouse his physician, under penalty of his deep displeasure, no matter how great his agony might be.

And yet the sick man had been suffering terribly. His pulse was in an alarming condition; the pain had become frightful, and the feeling of suffocation had returned.

Several times — though Teisch had merely regarded this as a sign that delirium had set in — several times the count had uttered the queen's name. "Ungrateful woman! she has not sent once to inquire for me!" he had exclaimed. Then, as if talking to himself, he had muttered, "I wonder what she will say to-morrow, when she hears that I am dead?"

Gilbert saw that everything depended upon the impending crisis, and set vigorously to work to fight the malady. The attack lasted eight hours, and all that time Gilbert contended with death like an expert duellist, parrying each thrust, anticipating each assault, so to speak; and at the expiration of these eight hours he had the satisfaction of seeing that the fever had abated, and that his patient's sufferings had become much less poignant; but he was too skillful a physician to cherish any hope, or even feel a doubt as to the ultimate result. He saw that Mirabeau was doomed.

Strange to say, from that moment, as if impressed with the same conviction, Mirabeau began to speak of himself as of one who had been, but who had now ceased to be. His physiognomy, too, assumed a strange solemnity of expression; his voice became grave and solemn, and almost prophetic in its tone and modulations. His utterances were characterised by greater purity, profundity, and liberality; while in the sentiments he expressed there was a spirit of kindness and unselfishness which made them almost sublime.

It having been announced to him that a young man who had seen him only once, and would not give his name, craved admittance, the count turned to Gilbert, as if to ask permission to receive him.

Gilbert understood, and gave Teisch orders to admit the visitor.

A youth of nineteen entered slowly and reverently, and, kneeling by Mirabeau's couch, took his hand and kissed it, sobbing convulsively the while.

Mirabeau seemed to search his memory for some vague recollection of the young man. "Ah! he exclaimed, suddenly, "I know you. You are the young man I saw at Argenteuil."

"Thank God! that is all I could ask," exclaimed the youth; and, rising, he left the room, with both hands pressed over his streaming eyes.

A few minutes afterwards Teisch entered the room with a note containing these words: —

"When I kissed the hand of Monsieur de Mirabeau at Argenteuil, I told him I would gladly die for him.

"I am ready to keep my word.

"Yesterday I read in an English paper that the transfusion of blood had proved successful in London in a case similar to that of our illustrious invalid.

"If such an operation would be likely to prove of benefit in Monsieur de Mirabeau's case, I offer my blood, which is young and pure.

"MARNAIS."

On hearing these lines read, Mirabeau could not keep back the tears. He sent for the young man; but, as if desirous of avoiding any expression of gratitude, he had hastened away, leaving both his Paris and Argenteuil address, however.

Soon afterwards Mirabeau consented to receive several relatives and a few of his most intimate friends; but he absolutely refused to see any physician except Gilbert, and when the latter insisted, exclaimed, "No, doctor, you have had all the bother of my illness, and you shall have all the credit if I recover."

From time to time he asked who had called or sent to inquire concerning his condition; and, though he did not

say, "Has the queen sent any one from the palace?" Gilbert divined, by the dying man's sigh when the end of the list was reached, that the one name he longed to hear was not there.

Afterwards, without referring openly to the king or queen, he began to discourse with wonderful clearness and eloquence upon the political situation, and especially of the course he should pursue towards England if he were prime minister.

It was against Pitt that he seemed particularly anxious to contend.

"Oh, that Pitt, he is eminently a man of preparations!" he exclaimed. "He rules rather by what he threatens to do, than by what he does. If I had lived, I should have covered him with mortification!"

Ever and anon a cry of "Long live Mirabeau!" rose to the windows, sent up by the people below, — a cry which resembled a prayer, — wailing rather than hopeful, however.

Mirabeau had the window opened, in order that the sound might reach him more clearly, and perhaps compensate, in part, for the sufferings he was enduring. For several seconds he bent eagerly forward, as if drinking in and absorbing the sound; then he murmured, —

"Oh, these good people, slandered, insulted, and despised, like myself! It would be only just if it had been they who forgot me, and *she* who thus rewarded me."

Night came on. Gilbert would not leave his patient, but had a couch placed near the bed, and lay down upon it.

Mirabeau made no objection to this. Now that he felt sure of death, he no longer seemed afraid of his physician.

As soon as daylight came, he bade them open the windows.

"I shall die to-day, my dear doctor," he remarked. "When one has reached my condition, there is nothing for him to do but perfume himself and crown himself with

flowers, in order to enter upon the sleep that knows no waking as pleasantly as possible. Have I your permission to do as I wish?”

Gilbert nodded his assent. The count summoned his servants.

“Jean, get me the finest flowers you can find,” he said; “and you, Teisch, must make me look as handsome as possible.”

Just then a cannon-shot was heard. Whence it came no one knew.

Mirabeau started up.

“What! have the obsequies of Achilles begun already?” he exclaimed.

Jean had hardly told the crowd about the house the object of his errand — for as soon as he appeared everybody rushed up for news of the invalid — before men began to run up and down the street shouting, “Flowers for Mirabeau!” Every door opened, and everybody gave all they had, either in their apartments or their conservatories; and in ten minutes the count’s house was filled to overflowing with the choicest flowers.

“My dear doctor,” remarked Mirabeau, “I should like a few minutes to bid farewell to some one who must leave this house before I do. If any one is disposed to insult this person, I commend her to your protection.”

“Very well; I will leave you.”

“Yes, but wait in the adjoining room; and when this person has gone, you will not leave me again until after my death. Promise me that.”

Gilbert promised, and was about leaving the room when Mirabeau stopped him.

“Before you go,” he said, “open my secretary and bring me a small casket you will find there.”

The casket was heavy, and Gilbert surmised that it was full of gold. Mirabeau motioned him to place it on the table beside the bed.

Gilbert withdrew, and spent the next quarter of an hour

in answering the anxious inquiries of the people that thronged the lower floor of the house.

At the expiration of that time a carriage drew up before the door, and Jean ushered out a lady wrapped in a long mantle. A moment afterwards the door of Mirabeau's chamber opened again, and the feeble voice of the invalid was heard asking for the doctor. Gilbert hastened to him.

"Here, put this casket back in its place, my dear doctor," said Mirabeau. Then, seeing Gilbert seemed astonished to find the casket as heavy as it had been before, he exclaimed, "Odd, is n't it, where such disinterestedness has been hiding all this time!"

On returning to the bedside, Gilbert saw an embroidered handkerchief, trimmed with lace, on the floor. It was wet with tears.

"Ah," he remarked to Mirabeau, "she took nothing away, but she left something behind."

Mirabeau took the handkerchief and pressed it to his brow.

"It seems that *she* is the only one who has no heart," he murmured bitterly. And he sank back on the bed and closed his eyes.

CHAPTER XXX.

FLEE ! FLEE ! FLEE !

THE few remaining hours of Mirabeau's life were hours of frightful agony. When he returned to consciousness, it was through the gateway of terrible pain. He tried to speak, but his efforts were futile. Gilbert had no difficulty in guessing the desire that was uppermost in his mind, however. The sick man had no idea whether his recent swoon had lasted an hour or a day; but he wished to know whether during that time the queen had sent to inquire for him? The register on which each caller inscribed his name was brought up, and Jean and Teisch were both questioned; but no messenger had come from the royal household, or even from the Tuileries.

It became evident that Mirabeau was making an almost superhuman effort to speak. At last he succeeded.

"Oh, do they not see that when I am dead they are lost?" he gasped. "I bear the mourning garments of the monarchy away with me, and the factions will tear the remains of it into tatters over my grave!"

Gilbert darted to the invalid's bedside.

"While there is life there is hope," he said to himself; and, taking a spoon, he poured into it a few drops of the greenish liquid he had given Mirabeau once before, — only this time he did not dilute it.

"If you want the elixir to have any effect, my dear doctor, you must give me the entire bottleful," said Mirabeau, smiling.

"And why?"

"Do you suppose that such an abuser of every good gift

as I am could have such a treasure in my possession without abusing it? I had the liquid analysed, my friend, and have since taken it, not by the drop, but by the spoonful, — not for the sake of life, but for the sake of the delightful visions it inspired. Thanks to it, I have lived a century, and have possessed, in imagination, the treasures which in real life have evaded me, — strength, love, and fabulous riches. Don't repent of your gift, doctor, but congratulate yourself upon it. My life has been a poor botched, wretched affair. I do not know that I owe God any thanks for such an existence as it has been, but I do owe you thanks for your poison. Fill the spoon again, doctor, and give me another dose."

Gilbert complied with the dying man's request, though not without reluctance. After a few seconds, as if the near approach of death enabled him to lift the veil of futurity, Mirabeau exclaimed,—

"Ah! happy are those who die in this year of 1791. They have seen only the serene and resplendent face of the Revolution, and never before has so great a change been effected with so little bloodshed; but the day is near at hand when an entirely different state of things will prevail. Perhaps you imagine they will regret my death down there at the Tuileries. On the contrary, it will prove a welcome relief. With me, they would have been obliged to govern in a certain way, and I was consequently not a help, but a hindrance. I could do nothing without her, and she would have none of me. I pledged myself, like a fool; she bound herself to nothing, promised nothing. So, doctor, all this is for the best; and if you will promise me one thing, I shall not be troubled by a single regret during the few hours I have to live."

"And what do you wish me to promise?"

"Promise me if my exit from life is too hard, too painful — promise me, not only as a physician, but also as a friend, or rather as a philosopher — promise me that you will help me through."

"Why do you ask me this ?"

"Because, though I know that death is near, I feel that life is still strong within me, and the last step will be hard to take."

"I have promised not to leave you. If God has condemned you to die, trust me to do all that it is in my power to alleviate your sufferings. If death comes, it will find me here beside you."

It was evident that the invalid had only waited for this promise. "I thank you," he murmured gratefully; and then his head sank back on his pillow.

For three hours after this, his icy hand rested quietly in Gilbert's. His breathing was so regular, his countenance so placid, his whole attitude so restful, that one would have supposed he was asleep. But about eight o'clock Gilbert felt the cold hand suddenly tremble, and then clench itself.

"The last struggle has come; the death agony is beginning," Gilbert said to himself.

Great drops of sweat suddenly appeared upon the brow of the dying man, and his eyes glittered with a wild, unnatural light. He made a motion indicative of a desire to drink, and his attendants offered him water, and wine, and orangeade; but he shook his head. He desired none of these things.

Then he motioned them to bring him pen, ink, and paper. They quickly obeyed, in order that no thought of this great mind should be lost; and, taking the pen, he traced with a firm hand the words of Hamlet: "To die, to sleep —"

Gilbert pretended not to understand. Mirabeau dropped the pen, and, grasping his breast with both hands, as if trying to tear it open, uttered a few inarticulate sounds; then, picking up the pen again, wrote, with an almost superhuman effort, "This pain is becoming insupportable. Must a man be left on the rack for hours, when a few drops of opium would spare him this torture?"

But the doctor hesitated. He was there to fight against death, not to act as its second in the duel.

The agony became more and more terrible. The sick man wrung his hands and gnawed his pillow.

At last he broke the bonds of paralysis.

"Oh, these doctors! these doctors!" he exclaimed. "Gilbert, are you not my friend? Did you not promise to save me from such agony? You make me regret having trusted you. Gilbert, I appeal to your friendship, to your honour!" and with a shriek of agony he fell back on his pillow.

"You shall have what you ask, my friend," said Gilbert, sighing deeply.

He took the pen to write a prescription; but Mirabeau, hastily raising himself up in bed, snatched the pen from his hand, and, with fingers already stiffening in death, scrawled upon the paper these words in a handwriting which was scarcely legible: "Flee! Flee! Flee!"

He tried to sign his name, but only succeeded in tracing the first four letters.

"For *her*," he whispered, extending his rigid arm towards Gilbert; and again sank back on his pillow, motionless, breathless, sightless.

Mirabeau was dead.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE OBSEQUIES.

THE grief was intense, universal. In an instant the news spread from the centre of the town to its furthestmost limits, — from the Rue de Chaussée d'Antin to the barriers.

The populace raised a terrible clamour; then they took it upon themselves to see that proper respect was shown for the dead. They rushed to the theatres, tore down the play-bills, and closed the doors. A ball was in progress in a house on the Rue de Chaussée d'Antin that evening. They invaded the mansion, drove the dancers away, and broke the instruments of the musicians.

The national bereavement was formally announced to the Assembly by its president. Immediately afterwards, Barrère mounted the tribune, and moved that testimony to the Assembly's grief at the loss of such a man should be incorporated in the official records of the day, and that the Assembly should attend the funeral in a body.

On the following day, April 3d, the municipal officers appeared before the Assembly and asked that the church of Ste. Geneviève be constituted a Pantheon, or place of sepulchre for distinguished men, and that Mirabeau should be buried there first of all.

The following is the decree as first passed: —

“The National Assembly decrees that the new church of Ste. Geneviève shall be set apart for the reception of the ashes of illustrious men, dating from the epoch of French liberty.

“That Honoré Riquetti Mirabeau is adjudged worthy of this honour.

“That the Legislative Body is alone to decide upon whom this honour shall be conferred.

“That the municipal officers of the city of Paris shall be charged with the duty of putting the church of Ste. Geneviève in proper condition for this purpose, and of placing upon its pediment this inscription :

“‘TO HER GREAT MEN, BY A GRATEFUL NATION.’

“That while the new church of Ste. Geneviève is undergoing the necessary preparation for this purpose, the body of Riquetti Mirabeau shall be placed beside the remains of Descartes, in the crypt of the church of Ste. Geneviève.”

The next day, at four o'clock, the National Assembly left the legislative hall and proceeded in a body to Mirabeau's house, where all the city officers, cabinet ministers, and prominent government officials, together with a crowd of at least one hundred thousand persons, were already assembled. But in all this immense concourse there was not a single representative of the queen.

The procession took up its line of march, headed by Lafayette, as the commander of the National Guard of the kingdom.

Then came Tronchet, the president of the National Assembly; then the cabinet ministers; then the members of the Assembly, without any distinction of party,—Sieyès arm-in-arm with Charles de Lameth.

Immediately after the Assembly came the Jacobin Club, which had voted to wear mourning for eight days; and Robespierre, too poor to go to the expense of purchasing a new coat, had hired one, as he had done when he put on mourning for Benjamin Franklin.

Following the Jacobin Club came the entire population of Paris, between two lines of National Guards numbering more than thirty thousand men.

Funeral music—in which two instruments until then unknown in France, the trombone and the tam-tam, were heard for the first time—marked the time for this immense throng.

It was not until eight o'clock that the funeral *cortège* reached St. Eustache. The funeral oration was delivered by Cérutti. When it was concluded, ten thousand of the National Guards, who were in the church, discharged their muskets simultaneously. The shock was so great that not a single tile remained unbroken; for a moment it seemed as if the arch of the temple had been rent in twain, and that the church would serve as a grave both for the dead and for the living.

The procession then resumed its line of march by torch-light; for the shades of night had descended, not only upon the streets through which the *cortège* passed, but upon the hearts of the mourners as well; for the death of Mirabeau seemed indeed a political eclipse. Who would guide the fiery steeds known as Hatred and Ambition now? The spirit of peace, watching in the midst of turmoil and war, had departed from the Assembly. Henceforth the chariot would roll on more swiftly, the descent be more abrupt. Who could tell whether it was hastening on to victory, or to an unfathomable abyss? The Pantheon was not reached until midnight.

But one important personage was absent, — Pétion. When questioned, he gave as a reason to two of his friends that he had read a plan for an anti-revolutionary conspiracy, written in Mirabeau's hand.

Three years afterwards, on a gloomy autumn day, the Convention, no longer in the Hall of the Manège, but in the Hall of the Tuileries, having killed the king, the queen, the Girondists, the members of the Cordelier Club, the Jacobins, and itself, — having nothing else left to kill, proceeded to kill the dead over again.

With savage delight the Convention declared it had been deceived in regard to Mirabeau's true character, and that his genius could not atone for his corruption; so a new decree was passed, excluding him from the Pantheon. Mirabeau was declared unworthy to share the last resting-place of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Descartes.

So a voice more terrible than that heard in the valley of Jehosaphat cried, "Pantheon, give up thy dead!"

And the Pantheon obeyed.

Mirabeau's body was delivered to the officer of the Convention, who, as he himself averred, removed the aforesaid body and reinterred it in a public burying-ground, — that is to say, Clamart, the burial-place of criminals.

And to render this punishment more terrible, — a punishment which extended beyond death's door, — this removal took place at the dead of night, without any escort, and without anything to indicate the place of re-interment, either cross, stone, or inscription of any kind.

Later on, however, an old gravedigger, when questioned on the subject, led the curious visitor to the centre of the enclosure, and, stamping his foot on the ground, exclaimed, —

"Here it is! I can vouch for that, for I helped to lower him into the grave, and nearly tumbled in after him, the confounded lead casket was so heavy."

Perhaps Mirabeau did not deserve the Pantheon; but this much is certain, — many repose, and many will repose, in consecrated ground who deserve ostracism far more than he.

Oh, France, somewhere within thy borders grant Mirabeau a tomb, and let his name be the sole epitaph, his bust the only ornament, and the future his sole judge!

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE MESSENGER.

ON the morning of April second, about an hour before Mirabeau breathed his last, a man attired in the uniform of a naval officer entered the palace of the Tuileries from the rear, and, like an old *habitué* of the place, promptly made his way to a back stairway used by the servants, but communicating by means of a long narrow corridor with the king's private apartments.

On seeing him, the valet in attendance uttered an exclamation of mingled joy and surprise; but the new-comer placed his finger warningly on his lip, and then asked, in a low tone, —

"Can the king see me, Monsieur Hué?"

"His Majesty is with General Lafayette now; but as soon as the general leaves —"

"You will announce me?"

"That is hardly necessary, as his Majesty is expecting you, and gave orders yesterday that you should be admitted immediately upon your arrival."

Just then they heard a small bell tinkle in the king's cabinet.

"There! his Majesty is about to ask for you now, I expect," added the valet.

"Then go in, Monsieur Hué, at once; and if the king is at liberty, ask him to grant me an audience immediately."

The valet opened the door, and announced the visitor almost instantly, — conclusive proof that the king was alone.

"Show him in! Show him in!" exclaimed the king. "I have been looking for him ever since yesterday."

"I am a few hours behind time, sire, but I am sure your Majesty will pardon me when you learn the reason of the delay."

"Come, come, Monsieur de Charny. I have been awaiting your arrival with great impatience, it is true; but I know perfectly well that you would not have permitted any mere trifle to retard your progress. You are here, and I assure you you are welcome;" and the king offered the count his hand in a most cordial manner.

"Sire, I received your orders the night before last, and left Montmédy yesterday morning at three o'clock."

"How did you travel?"

"By post-chaise."

"That explains the slight delay," said the king, smiling.

"On the contrary, I travelled at such a rate of speed that I should have reached here by eleven o'clock last night if I had taken the most direct route; but I wished thoroughly to inform myself of the advantages and disadvantages of the route chosen by your Majesty, to find out whether the post-stations were well supplied with horses, and, above all, to ascertain how much time to a minute, or even to a second, would be required to make the journey from Montmédy to Paris, and consequently from Paris to Montmédy."

"Bravo, Monsieur de Charny! What an efficient helper you are! But let me begin by giving you some idea of the situation here."

"I should judge from what I hear that matters must be in pretty bad shape."

"They are in such a shape that I am to all intents and purposes a prisoner in the palace, my dear count. As I just remarked to my gaoler, General Lafayette, I would much rather be king of Metz than of France, just now. You have heard of the flight of my aunts, I suppose?"

"I have heard the mere fact, like everybody else; but I am acquainted with none of the details."

"You know the Assembly only allows us such priests as

have taken the oath to support the Constitution. Well, the poor women became frightened as Easter approached, and thought they would imperil the salvation of their souls if they confessed to such a priest; so, by my advice, I confess it, they started for Rome. There was no law forbidding the trip, and certainly the dear people had no good reason to fear lest the two poor old ladies should prove valuable auxiliaries to the party of *émigrés*. They intrusted the preparations for their departure to Narbonne, who must have managed rather clumsily, I think, for the secret leaked out; and on the eve of their departure they were favoured with a visit similar to that with which the populace honoured us on the fifth of October. Fortunately, they made their way out by one door as the mob entered by the other. There was not a carriage to be found, of course, — though, according to agreement, three were to have been in waiting, — and they had to go afoot as far as Meudon. There they succeeded in procuring vehicles, and were soon safely on their way. But all Paris was in a state of intense excitement; the papers were full of the affair the next day. Marat declared they had carried off millions; Desmoulins declared they had carried off the dauphin. Of course there was n't a particle of truth in all this. The poor old ladies had three or four hundred thousand francs in their purses, and this gave them anxiety enough, without taking a child along, whose presence would have been certain to betray them, as they were recognised first at Moret, where they were allowed to continue their journey, and afterwards at Arnay-le-Duc, where they were stopped. I had to write to the Assembly, asking that they might be allowed to continue their journey; but in spite of my letter the Assembly discussed the matter an entire day. Finally, my aunts were permitted to proceed on their way, on condition that the committee should draft a law against emigration."

"Yes; but I believe that, after Mirabeau's eloquent protest, the Assembly rejected the measure."

"Yes, it was rejected; but a deep humiliation accompanied that triumph. When some friends of mine saw what a disturbance the departure of these poor old ladies had occasioned, they rushed to the Tuileries to offer me their lives, if necessary; and forthwith it became noised about that a conspiracy for abducting me had been discovered. Lafayette, who had been enticed to the Faubourg Saint Antoine under the pretext that there was a riot near the Bastille, returned to the Tuileries sword in hand, furious at having been thus duped, and then and there arrested and disarmed my poor friends. Pistols and knives were found upon several of them, for each man had caught up the first weapon he could lay his hands on."

"Oh, sire, sire! what terrible times these are!" exclaimed Charny.

"Nor is this all. Listen! Every year we go to St. Cloud, you know. It is a settled thing. We have always done it. Well, the day before yesterday, when we went down into the courtyard to get into our carriages, as usual, we found a crowd of at least fifteen hundred people around the vehicles. We seated ourselves in the carriages; but it was impossible to drive on, for the people clutched the horses' bridles and declared I wanted to run away, but shouldn't. After an hour of fruitless effort, we had to return to our apartments. The queen fairly wept with rage."

"But why wasn't Lafayette at hand to compel the populace to listen to reason?"

"Lafayette? Do you know what he was doing? First, he sent to St. Roch to have the tocsin sounded; then he ran to the Hôtel de Ville to ask for the red flag, inasmuch as he declared that the country was in danger. The country in danger because the king and queen were going to St. Cloud! Do you know who refused to let him have the flag, or, rather, who snatched it from his hands when he had succeeded in securing possession of it? Danton! Then he pretended that Danton had sold himself to me

for one hundred thousand francs per month. This is the present state of affairs, my dear count, to say nothing of the fact that Mirabeau, our chief dependence, is dying, — is perhaps even dead at this very moment.”

“All the more reason for making haste, sire.”

“I quite agree with you. Now tell me what you and Bouillé have decided upon. Everything is all right, I hope. That affair at Nancy furnished a good excuse for increasing his powers and placing more troops at his disposal.”

“Yes, sire; but, unfortunately, the arrangements of the minister of war conflicted with ours. He has withdrawn the regiment of Saxon hussars, and refuses to send the Swiss regiments.”

“You think the minister of war suspects, then?”

“No, sire. It was merely an unfortunate coincidence. But no matter; we must take the chances. If such an undertaking is prudently conducted, there are always about ninety chances of success out of a hundred, I should say.”

“Very well. Then what would you suggest?”

“Is your Majesty still inclined to take the Châlons, Clermont, and Stenay route, — though this is at least twenty leagues longer than the others?”

“I have already explained to Bouillé my reasons for preferring this route.”

“Yes, sire; and it is in accordance with these instructions that I have examined the route bush by bush, stone by stone, I might say. The map I made of it is in your Majesty’s possession, I believe.”

“Yes; and a model of clearness it is. I know the road almost as well as if I had travelled it myself.”

As he spoke, the king drew the map from a portfolio and spread it out upon the table. It was not engraved, but drawn by hand, and, as Charny had said, “not a tree nor a rock was wanting.”

“The real danger begins at Sainte Menchould, and ends

at Stenay, your Majesty," remarked Charny, as they bent over the map. "It is upon that portion of the road that we must concentrate our forces."

"Could they not come nearer to Paris, count,—as far as Châlons, for instance?"

"Châlons is too large a place for forty, fifty, or even a hundred men to be of much service, if your Majesty's safety should be endangered. Besides, Bouillé's powers of jurisdiction do not extend beyond Sainte Menehould. The best he can do—and he bade me mention this fact particularly to your Majesty—is to station his first detachment of troops at Sommeville Bridge,—here, sire, at the first post-station beyond Châlons," added Charny, pointing to the place mentioned.

"How long did it take you to make the journey?"

"Thirty-six hours."

"But you were in a light vehicle, and had only one servant with you."

"Yes; but I spent at least three hours in examining the country around Varennes, and in endeavouring to ascertain the best places for stationing relays of horses. The time thus lost will compensate for the extra weight of your coach. In my opinion, your Majesty could easily reach Montmédy in thirty-five or thirty-six hours."

"And what did you decide in regard to the relays at Varennes? That is an important matter. We must be subjected to no delay there."

"I think the relays should be stationed on the other side of the town."

"And why?"

"On account of the situation of the town. I have passed through Varennes five or six times since I left Paris, and I spent nearly three hours there yesterday. It is a town of about sixteen hundred inhabitants, and is divided into two distinct parts, known as the upper and lower town, separated by the river Aire, and connected only by a bridge that spans the river. This bridge is commanded by

a high tower, — the tower of an old toll-house, which stands in a dark, narrow place, where the slightest obstacle would effectually impede the traveller's progress. As there is some risk to be run, I think it would be much better to take our chances of getting across this bridge with the horses and postilions from Clermont, than to change horses near a place which can easily be guarded, or rather obstructed, by three or four men, in case the king should be recognised and an alarm given."

"That is true, though you will be there in case of any trouble."

"That will be both my duty and my pleasure, if the king deems me worthy of such an honour."

Louis XVI. again offered his hand to Charny.

"Has Bouillé selected the troops to be posted along the route?" he asked.

Charny drew a folded paper from his breast and respectfully presented it to the king, who, after having read the memorandum, remarked, —

"I think his selection very judicious; but as the detachments must be stationed in these cities and towns several days beforehand, what excuse can be given for their presence?"

"We have invented a very specious pretext, I think, sire. They will be ordered to serve as escorts for messengers who are taking a large sum of money from the minister of war to the Army of the North."

"Very good, very good!" responded the king. "By the way, speaking of money, did Bouillé receive the million I sent him?"

"Yes, sire. Your Majesty, however, is aware that the million was in *assignats*, which are now twenty per cent. below par. A faithful subject of your Majesty was nevertheless glad to take one hundred thousand crowns of the amount for his own use at their par value."

"And the rest, count?" asked the king, looking searchingly at Charny.

"The rest of the amount was discounted for Louis de Bouillé by his father's banker, who gave him a letter of credit on the Bethmanns of Frankfort. The money will be forthcoming when wanted."

"And now, count, tell me the name of this loyal adherent who furnished Bouillé with this hundred thousand crowns at such a great personal sacrifice."

"This loyal adherent is rich, sire, and consequently deserves no credit for what he has done."

"Nevertheless, the king wishes to know his name."

"Sire, the sole condition he exacted upon rendering this service was that he might remain unknown."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, sire."

"Monsieur de Charny," said the king, with unwonted dignity, "here is a ring which is very precious to me." He drew a plain gold ring from his finger as he spoke. "I took it from the hand of my dying father as I kissed that hand, already cold in death. Therein lies its only value; but to an understanding heart this ring will be more precious than the richest gem. Say as much to this faithful friend, and give him this ring in my name."

Charny's eyes filled with tears, and he dropped upon one knee to receive the ring from the king's hand.

Just at that moment the door opened without the slightest warning. The king turned hastily; for this was a flagrant violation of royal etiquette, and even considered an insult, unless excused by strong necessity.

It was the queen. She was as pale as death, and held a paper in her hand; but on seeing the kneeling count kissing the king's ring and placing it on his own finger, she uttered a cry of astonishment and dropped the paper.

Charny sprang to his feet and respectfully saluted the queen, who faltered, "Monsieur de Charny! Monsieur de Charny here with the king, at the Tuileries! — *and I not know it!*" she added, under her breath.

There was such sorrow in the poor woman's eyes that

Charny, who had not heard the concluding words, but who had divined their meaning, took two steps towards her.

"I have but just arrived," he remarked, "and I was about to ask permission to pay my respects to your Majesty."

A faint blush suffused the queen's cheeks. It was a long time since she had heard Charny's voice, and longer still since she had heard the tender intonation which he gave to these few words.

Involuntarily she extended both her hands; but recovering herself almost instantly, she paused, and pressed one on her wildly throbbing heart.

Meanwhile the king had walked toward the other end of the room, where a current of air from the open door and window had blown the scrap of paper which the queen had dropped upon her entrance.

"What do these three words, 'Flee! flee! flee!' and this fragment of a signature mean?" he inquired, picking it up and examining it.

"They mean that Mirabeau died ten minutes ago, and left us this farewell message," answered the queen.

"His counsel shall be obeyed, for it is wise," responded the king; "and the time has now come to carry it into execution." Then, turning to Charny, he added, "Follow the queen to her apartments, and tell her all."

The queen glanced first at Charny, and then at the king.

"Come with me," she said, at last, after a moment's hesitation. And she quitted the room precipitately, realising that it would be impossible for her to conceal her conflicting emotions if she tarried longer.

Charny bowed low to the king, and followed Marie Antoinette.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PROMISE.

WHEN the queen regained her own apartments she threw herself on a sofa and motioned Charny to close the door behind him.

She had hardly seated herself, however, before her overburdened heart found vent in a fit of passionate sobbing.

Her grief was so intense and so genuine that it touched Charny deeply, and fanned the dying embers of his former passion into new life; for such a passion as we have seen quicken and glow and blaze in the heart of this man is never wholly extinguished unless it is subjected to one of those terrible shocks which transform love into hatred.

He had learned to love Andrée with all the fire of his heart; but he loved the queen with all the tender compassion of his soul.

Without speaking, but unquestionably with more love than respect, Charny approached the queen, drew from her face one of the hands that covered it, and pressed it to his lips.

"Madame, I am proud to tell you that there has not been an hour or a day since I left you in which I have not been busy in your behalf," he said earnestly.

"Ah, Charny, there was a time when you would have laboured much less diligently in my behalf, perhaps, but when you would have thought of me much more frequently."

"I was burdened with a grave responsibility, madame. My mission necessitated the utmost secrecy up to the time of its entire completion. This was not accomplished until

to-day. Now, I can see you again and talk with you; whereas, before, I could not even write."

"You have given abundant proof of your loyalty, Olivier," said the queen, sadly. "I regret only one thing, — that you were able to do this only at the cost of another sentiment."

"Madame, as I have the king's permission, will you allow me to tell you what has been done to insure your safety?"

"Oh, Charny, Charny, have you nothing more important to say to me?"

She pressed the count's hand tenderly, and gave him a look which would once have filled his heart with rapturous delight; but even as she thus gazed at him she noticed that his toilet was so perfect in all its details that, though the fastidious queen could see no fault, the woman felt strangely dissatisfied.

"When did you return?" she asked.

"I have but just arrived from Montmédy."

"Then you must have travelled half-way across France."

"I have travelled ninety leagues by post-chaise since yesterday morning."

"Then how is it — pardon the question — that you are as immaculate in attire as one of Lafayette's aides when he comes straight from headquarters? Was the news you brought of so little importance?"

"Quite the contrary, madame; but I thought I should attract attention if I came to the Tuileries in a post-chaise covered with mud or dust; so I took the precaution to come afoot, in my uniform, like an officer returning to court after an absence of a week or two."

"Yes, I forgot for the moment that you have a residence in the city."

"And where, may I ask?"

"In the Rue Coq-Héron. It is there that the countess lives, is it not?"

"I think I had the honour to inform you, before my

departure, that Madame de Charny's residence is not mine. I went to my brother's rooms and made my toilet there."

The queen uttered a faint exclamation of joy, and seizing Charny's hand, pressed it to her lips. "I thank you, Olivier," she murmured, in a voice so broken with emotion that Charny felt the tears spring to his own eyes.

"You thank me! My God, and for what?"

"For the first happy moment I have known since your departure. I know this is the wildest folly, this jealousy of mine; but one must pity it, nevertheless. Oh, these men! they are fortunate indeed; for when they are jealous they can fight with their rivals, and kill or be killed. But women can do nothing but weep, though they know that their tears repel rather than attract."

Feeling himself in a dangerous position, Charny endeavoured to beat a sudden retreat, as skaters do, even at the risk of breaking the ice over which they glide.

"May I not tell your Majesty what I have been able to do for you in my absence?"

"You are right, Charny; the woman must not forget too long that she is a queen as well. Go on, Monsieur Ambassador. The *woman* has already heard all she had any right to expect; the *queen* is listening now."

So Charny told her all, and Marie Antoinette listened with breathless attention, as well as a profound appreciation of his efforts; for it seemed impossible to her that mere devotion to a sovereign should go so far as this. Love, impassioned and intense love could alone anticipate all these obstacles, and invent such clever methods of surmounting them.

When he had finished his recital, she said, regarding him the while with an expression of ineffable tenderness, "Will it really give you such great happiness to save me?"

"What? How can you ask me such a question? Why, it is the highest dream of my ambition. If I succeed, it will be the crowning glory of my life."

"I would much rather you regarded it as simply the reward of your love," answered the queen, sadly. "But no matter. You earnestly desire that this great work of rescuing the king, the queen, and the dauphin of France should be accomplished by you, do you not?"

"I only await your consent to devote my best efforts, and my very life itself, to that object."

"Yes; and I realise, my friend, that this devotion on your part should be entirely free from all outside influences and entanglements. It is impossible that my husband and children should be saved by a hand that would not dare to extend itself to sustain them, in case they should slip, or be in danger of falling on the dangerous road we are about to travel together. To you I intrust their lives and mine; and you, in turn, will have compassion on me, will you not?"

"Have compassion on you, madame?" repeated Charny, wonderingly.

"Yes; at a time when I need all my strength, all my courage, and all my presence of mind, you surely would not — It is a foolish fancy, perhaps, but how can I help it? Are there not persons who are afraid to venture out at night for fear of ghosts, which in the daylight they know perfectly well have no existence? You would not allow me to be lost, perhaps, for want of a simple promise, — for want of one little word? Surely you would not —"

Charny interrupted the queen.

"Madame, I desire your Majesty's safety above all things; I also have the happiness and prosperity of France deeply at heart. I want, too, the honour of completing the work I have undertaken, and I assure you I despise myself for being able to make no greater sacrifice. I swear to see Madame de Charny again only with your Majesty's permission."

And, bowing respectfully but coldly, he withdrew, though the queen, frightened by the tone in which

these last words were uttered, endeavoured to detain him.

In fact, Charny had hardly closed the door behind him when the queen stretched out her arms and exclaimed piteously, "Oh, would it were I he had vowed not to see, if he but loved me as he loves her!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SECOND SIGHT.

ABOUT eight o'clock on the morning of the nineteenth of June, Gilbert was striding up and down the floor of his lodgings in the Rue Saint-Honoré, going to the window every now and then, and leaning out like a man who is waiting impatiently for some one who does not come.

In his hand he held a folded paper, and a very important document it must have been; for two or three times the doctor had unfolded it and read it, then re-folded it, only to re-peruse it a few moments afterwards.

At last the sound of carriage-wheels was heard, and Gilbert again hurried to the window. But he was too late; the person who had come in the carriage had already entered the house.

The doctor seemed to have no doubt as to the identity of this visitor, however; for, stepping to the door of the ante-chamber, he called out, "Bastien, open the door for the Comte de Charny!"

Once more he had unfolded the paper to which he had so often referred, when Bastien announced, not the Comte de Charny, but Baron Zannone.

The name was so far distant from Gilbert's thoughts that he started violently, as if the vivid flash of lightning which precedes a terrific thunder-clap had suddenly blinded him; but, quickly recovering himself, he re-folded the paper and concealed it in his breast-pocket.

"Count Cagliostro!" he repeated, astonished at the announcement.

"The same, my dear Gilbert!" exclaimed the new-comer, blithely; "though I know very well it was not I whom you expected to see, but Charny. Charny is busy just now, however, — I will tell you all about the reasons for his delay presently, — and won't get here for half an hour. Knowing this fact, I said to myself, 'As I'm here in the neighbourhood, I'll run in and see Gilbert for a minute.' Though I was not expected, I hope I am none the less welcome on that account."

"You know that at any hour of the day or night, two doors are always open to you here, — the door of the house, and the door of its master's heart."

"Thank you, Gilbert. Some day I, too, may be able to prove to you how much I love you. If that day ever comes, the proof will not be lacking. Now let us have a little talk."

"About what?" asked Gilbert, smiling; for Cagliostro's appearance upon the scene was always the prelude to some startling piece of intelligence.

"What about? Why, about the chief topic of the day, — the king's speedy departure."

Gilbert felt himself shiver from head to foot, though, thanks to his wonderful will power, the smile did not desert his lips for a moment, or his colour change.

"And as we have considerable time at our disposal, I think I'll take a seat," added Cagliostro, suiting the action to the word.

His first feeling of terror having somewhat abated, Gilbert said to himself that though it was probably chance that had brought Cagliostro there, his coming might, after all, prove almost providential; for, as the count had no secrets from him, he would probably tell him all he had learned concerning the king's intended flight.

"Well, the long-talked-of event is to take place to-morrow, is it not?" asked Cagliostro, seeing that Gilbert showed no disposition to reply.

"You know I always let you talk on to the end; for

even if you make a mistake occasionally, there is always something to be learned, not only from your entire discourse, but from your slightest word."

"And in what have I made any mistake thus far? Was it in predicting the death of Favras? though I did everything in my power to prevent it, up to the very last minute. Was I wrong in declaring that the king was deceiving Mirabeau, and that the latter would never be made a cabinet minister? Am I mistaken, do you think, in prophesying that Robespierre will some day rebuild the scaffold of Charles I., and that Bonaparte will reconstruct the throne of Charlemagne? True, that prediction has not come to pass yet, but it will in time. And now, — to-day, — my dear Gilbert, when I tell you that the king intends to flee to-morrow, you know I speak the truth, — you, of all others, — inasmuch as you have assisted most zealously in all the arrangements for his flight."

"Even if that be true, you will hardly expect me to admit it, I suppose."

"No. Still, I don't mind making a few more revelations, in order to convince you beyond any possibility of doubt. The queen, who is wedded to all the luxuries of life, and who naturally desires to make herself as comfortable as possible on this journey, which, according to Charny's calculations, is to last about thirty-five or thirty-six hours, has ordered a handsome new dressing-case of Desbrosses on the Rue Notre Dame des Victoires. This dressing-case, which was ostensibly ordered for the queen's sister, the Archduchess Christine, was only completed yesterday morning, and taken to the Tuileries in the afternoon. Next, the journey is to be made in a large and comfortable travelling-coach built by Louis the fashionable carriage-maker on the Champs Elysées, and Charny, at this very moment, is paying him one hundred and twenty-five louis, — that is to say, one half of the price agreed upon. Lastly, Montmorin, without knowing what he has been doing, has signed a passport for a certain

x Baroness de Korff, her two children, two maids, steward, and three lackeys. Madame de Korff is Madame de Tourzel, governess of the royal children of France, — Madame Royale and the dauphin; her two maids are the queen and Madame Elizabeth; her steward is the king himself, and her three lackeys are Isidore de Charny, Monsieur de Malden, and Monsieur de Valory. The paper you were holding in your hand when I came in just now, but which you concealed in your pocket, was the aforesaid passport, which reads as follows,” — and Cagliostro repeated the contents of the document, word for word, exactly as if he had been reading it aloud: —

“IN THE KING’S NAME :

“You are hereby ordered to pass the Baroness de Korff, together with her two children, *one woman servant*, a valet, and three lackeys.

“MONTMORIN,

“*Minister of Foreign Affairs.*”

“You said just now that Madame Elizabeth and the queen were to personate Madame de Korff’s two maids, but the passport mentions only one servant woman.”

“I will explain the reason of that. On reaching Bondy, Madame de Tourzel — though she expects to go through to Montmédy — will be requested to leave the carriage, and Charny will take her place, in order to be close at hand in case of any trouble. The queen will then become Madame de Korff; and as there will be only one other woman, Madame Elizabeth, in the coach, it was not necessary to have two maids mentioned in the passport. Now do you desire any further particulars? If so, here they are. The king’s departure was to have taken place on the first of June. Monsieur de Bouillé quite counted upon it, and even wrote his Majesty a curious sort of letter, in which he invited, even urged, him to come at once, as the soldiers were being corrupted every day; and if they were allowed to take the oath to support the Constitution, he would not

answer for them. By being corrupted, he meant, of course, that the soldiers are beginning to understand the difference between a monarchy which has made the people the slaves of the nobility for three centuries, and a constitution which declares all men equal in the sight of the law, and makes promotion the reward of courage and merit. Strange, passing strange, is it not, that the ungrateful army should begin to feel a sneaking fondness for the Constitution? But, alas! the big travelling-coach and the dressing-case were neither of them quite done, so it was impossible to start on the first of the month, which was very unfortunate, to say the least, as the army has become more and more demoralised, and most of the regulars have sworn to support the Constitution since that time. The eighth was the next date appointed; but it was so late when Bouillé was notified that he was obliged to send word that he was not ready. Then they concluded to start on the twelfth. They would have preferred the eleventh, but they distrusted Madame de Rochereul, the sweetheart of one of Lafayette's aides, who was in attendance upon the dauphin just at that time, and feared she should discover that something unusual was going on, and report the fact; so, as I remarked before, they determined to postpone their departure until the twelfth, when her term of service would be over. But in the mean time the king bethought him that he would receive his quarterly allowance of six million francs six days afterwards, and, as you can very readily understand, this was well worth waiting for; besides, Leopold, the great temporiser, the Fabius of monarchs, had promised to have fifteen thousand Austrians occupying the approaches to Arlon by the fifteenth. These foreign kings are not lacking in goodwill, you see; the only trouble is they have so many little affairs of their own to attend to. Austria has just devoured both Liège and Brabant, and must now have a little time to digest them; and Austria has to sleep while it digests, like a boa-constrictor. Meanwhile, Catherine of Russia is

whetting her teeth on Turkey, and gnawing the bones of Poland; for she is very fond of lion's marrow, this worthy empress! In short, it was decided that the departure should take place at midnight on Sunday, the nineteenth; then another despatch was sent, postponing it until the twentieth, at the same hour, — that is to say, to-morrow night, — a postponement which may lead to serious complications, as Bouillé had already given the necessary orders to his troops, and had no chance to countermand them. So be on your guard, my dear Gilbert, be on your guard!"

"Count, I shall make no attempt to dissemble with you," Gilbert replied. "All you have said is perfectly true. And I am the less inclined to dissimulate because, though I was strongly opposed to the king's departure from Paris, or his leaving France, at one time, I feel now that, on account of the danger that threatens the queen and their children, as a husband and father he should flee, even though he perhaps ought to remain as a king."

"My dear Gilbert, it is not as a father, as a husband, or even as a man that Louis XVI. is compelled to flee from France. Nor is it on account of the famous fifth and sixth of October. No; he is a Bourbon on his father's side, and the Bourbons know how to face danger. He leaves France on account of a constitution which, being modelled by the Assembly after that of the United States, does not allow a king sufficient air to breathe, though it is well adapted to a republic. He leaves France because of that famous St.-Cloud affair, when he tried to prove that he was a free man, but the people showed him that he was a prisoner. Gilbert, you are a firm believer in a constitutional monarchy, — a monarchy tempered with liberty, — a delightful Utopia, in short; but you must know that kings really have but one religion, — the religion of royalty. They not only consider their persons, anointed by holy oil at Rheims, sacred, but they consider their dwellings and servants sacred as well. One must not lay hands upon

a king, under penalty of death. Now, on the day the people prevented King Louis from going to St.-Cloud, somebody laid hands upon his royal person. When the Knights of the Poniard were forcibly ejected from the Tuileries, the king's servants were outraged. The king cannot tolerate this. It is his idea of the abomination of desolation. That is the reason why he so hastily summoned Charny. That is the reason why the king, who so persistently refused to be carried off by Favras, or to make his escape in company with his aunts, has consented to flee to-morrow in the attire of a servant and under the name of Durand; though as kings will be kings to the very last, he told his valets to be sure to pack in one of the trunks the crimson robe embroidered in gold which he wore at Cherbourg."

Gilbert scrutinised the face of Cagliostro closely while the latter talked, in the hope of reading his inmost thoughts; but no human eye could pierce the mask of raillery with which the great necromancer screened his face, and Gilbert decided to question him openly.

"All you have said is true, count, I repeat it. Still, why do you come and tell me all this? In what character do you come,—as an enemy, to warn me of your opposition, or as a friend, to proffer me your aid?"

"I come, my dear Gilbert," the count replied affectionately, "as a teacher would come to a beloved pupil, to warn him that he is making a mistake in attaching himself to a crumbling ruin, a tottering edifice, a waning principle, called Monarchy. A man like you should not be a man of the past, or even of the present, but of the future. Abandon this thing in which you do not believe for that in which you do believe. Do not desert the substance, to follow the shadow. If you will not be an active supporter of the Revolution, be at least a passive looker-on; do not try to obstruct the road. Mirabeau was an intellectual giant, but even Mirabeau had to succumb before the on-rushing tide of progress."

"I will decide upon these matters when the king is in a

place of safety. The king has made me his confidant, his auxiliary, his accomplice, so to speak. I have accepted the trust he reposed in me, and I will be faithful to it until the last. I am a physician, my dear count, and I must make the physical welfare of my patient the first consideration. Now, you must answer me in your turn. In your mysterious projects and secret plans, is it essential for this plot to succeed or fail? If you are resolved that it is to prove a failure, it is useless to fight against you. Merely say that we are not to go, and we will bow our heads and await the blow."

"My brother," Cagliostro replied impressively, even solemnly, "if, urged on by the God who has mapped out my course, I should find it necessary to smite those whom you love, or rather whom you feel it your duty to protect, I should certainly remain in the shadow as much as possible, and at least endeavour to leave you in ignorance as to the source from which the blow came. I do not come as a friend, — I, who have so often been the victim of kings, cannot be their friend and champion; but, on the other hand, I do not come as an enemy. I come with the scales in my hand to tell you I have weighed this last Bourbon in the balance and found him wanting; but I do not think his death is essential to the success of our most holy cause. Like Pythagoras, too, I hardly admit the right of man to extinguish the life of the smallest and most insignificant insect; so God forbid that I should rashly tamper with that of a human being, — the lord of creation. Wherefore I have come, not merely to say that I will remain neutral, but to ask if my assistance is needed, and, if so, to proffer it to you."

Once more Gilbert scrutinised his visitor's countenance closely, as if endeavouring to read his secret heart.

"What a sceptic you are!" exclaimed the count. "As a man of letters, you must know the story of Achilles' lance, which could both wound and heal. I possess such a weapon. The woman who once personated the queen in

the groves of Versailles, might she not also personate the queen in the apartments of the Tuileries, or upon some road other than that taken by the real queen? My suggestion is not to be despised, I assure you, my dear Gilbert."

"Be frank enough to tell me why you make this offer."

"Merely in order that the king may leave France, and so enable us to establish a republic."

"A republic!"

"Why not?"

"Because when I examine France from north to south, and from east to west, I fail to discover a single republican."

"You are mistaken, for I see three, — Pétion, Camille Desmoulins, and your humble servant. You can see these three as well as I can; but there are others I see, but whom you do not see, though you will when the time comes. You can count upon my making a display that will astonish you, then."

Gilbert reflected a moment; then, extending his hand to Cagliostro, he said: "If only my own life, reputation, honour, and memory were at stake, I should accept your offer at once; but a monarchy, a king, a queen, a dynasty, and an entire country are involved, and I can make no compact for them. So remain neutral, my dear count. That is all I ask."

Cagliostro smiled.

"Yes, yes, I understand," he replied, "I am the 'Necklace Man.' Never mind, the despised 'Necklace Man' will give you some very good advice, nevertheless."

"Hush!" said Gilbert. "Somebody just rang the bell."

"What does that matter? You know very well who it is. It is Monsieur de Charny who is at the door. The advice I was about to give you may be of service to him as well. Come in, count, come in."

For Charny had appeared in the doorway; but seeing Gilbert engaged in conversation with a stranger, when he

had expected to find him alone, he paused, in evident doubt and anxiety.

"My advice is this," continued Cagliostro. "Beware of too costly dressing-cases, too heavy vehicles, and, too striking likenesses. Adieu, Gilbert; adieu, count, and to use the expression of those to whom I wish a prosperous journey, God have you in His holy keeping."

And, saluting Gilbert amicably, and the count most courteously, the prophet withdrew.

"Who is that man, doctor?" inquired Charny, when the sound of Cagliostro's retreating footsteps had died away.

"One of my friends," replied Gilbert; "a man who knows all our plans, it seems, but who came to give me his word that he would not betray us."

"And his name — ?"

"Is Baron Zannone."

"It is strange," replied Charny, "I don't know the name, and yet his face seems familiar. Have you the passport, doctor?"

"Here it is, count."

Charny took the document, unfolded it, and was soon so deeply absorbed in its perusal that he seemed to have entirely forgotten Baron Zannone, at least for the time being.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE TWENTIETH OF JUNE.

MEANWHILE let us see what was going on in different parts of the city on the night of the twentieth of June. It was not without cause that the royal family regarded Madame de Rochereul with suspicion. Though her duties ceased on the eleventh, she invented an excuse for returning to the palace, where she discovered that, though the queen's jewel caskets were in their accustomed places, her diamonds were missing. In fact, they had been intrusted by her Majesty to her hairdresser, Léonard, who was also to leave Paris on the night of the twentieth, a few hours in advance of his royal mistress, and under the protection of Monsieur de Choiseul, who was to command the detachment of troops stationed at the Sommeville Bridge. This gentleman also had charge of the relays of horses for Varennes, and he was now at his house on the Rue d'Artois, waiting for the final orders of the king and queen.

It was certainly rather imprudent to encumber Monsieur de Choiseul with Master Léonard, or, indeed, for the queen to take a hairdresser with her at all; but what foreign artist could successfully undertake such wonderful coiffures as Léonard constructed for her? When one's hairdresser is a man of genius, one does not abandon him without a struggle.

The result of all this was that Madame de Rochereul shrewdly suspected that the time of departure was set for the evening of Monday, the twentieth, and she imparted her suspicions not only to her lover, Monsieur de Gouvion, one of Lafayette's aides, but also to Monsieur Bailly, the mayor of the city.

Lafayette went to the king and frankly told him of these revelations, which he evidently considered unworthy of notice, however.

Bailly was even more accommodating; for while Lafayette became as blind as any astronomer, he, Bailly, became as chivalrous as any knight, and even sent Madame de Rochereul's letter to the queen.

Monsieur de Gouvion, being more strongly influenced by his sweetheart, retained his suspicions, and, under the pretext of giving a little entertainment, had assembled about a dozen of the officers of the National Guard at his rooms in the Tuileries. Five or six of these men were posted by him at different entrances to the palace, while he himself, assisted by five of his brother officers, kept a close watch over the doors of Monsieur de Villequier's apartments, to which his attention had been specially directed.

About the same hour, in a parlour on the Rue Coq-Héron, with which we are already familiar, sat a young woman who was apparently as calm as she was beautiful, though she was really moved to the depths of her inmost soul. She was engaged in earnest conversation with a young man about twenty-four years of age, who was standing in front of her, attired in a jacket and breeches of buckskin, terminating in a pair of high boots turned down at the top. He was armed with a hunting-knife, and held his hat in his hand.

The young woman seemed to be finding fault with some one; the young man, to be defending him.

"Why has he not called to see me since his return to Paris, two months and a half ago?" she asked.

"My brother has sent me to inquire for your welfare several times since his return, madame."

"I am aware of that fact, viscount, and am duly grateful to him; but on the eve of another departure, it seems to me that he might have come in person to bid me farewell."

"It must be impossible for him to do so, as he intrusts this duty to me."

"Is this journey you are about to undertake likely to be a long one?"

"I do not know."

"Do you accompany your brother, or do you go in the opposite direction?"

"I believe we are to follow the same route, madame."

"Shall you tell him you have seen me?"

"Certainly, madame; for, judging by the solicitude he evinced, and his reiterated injunctions not to rejoin him until after I had seen you, he would not be likely to forgive such an omission on my part."

The young woman passed her hand over her eyes and heaved a sigh; then, after reflecting a moment, said, —

"You are a gentleman, viscount, and will consequently understand the full import of the question I am about to ask you. Answer me as if I were really your sister; answer me as you would answer your God. Is Monsieur de Charny likely to incur any serious peril in the journey he is about to undertake?"

"Who can say with certainty in these days, madame, where danger does or does not lie?" responded Isidore, endeavouring to evade the question. "If our poor brother George had been asked on the morning of the fifth of October whether he thought there was any danger, he would undoubtedly have answered, 'No.' But the very next morning he was lying cold and dead in the queen's doorway. Danger seems to spring up out of the earth in this age, madame, and one finds oneself suddenly brought face to face with death, without knowing even whence it comes."

Andrée turned pale.

"Then his life will be in peril! Is it not so, viscount?"

"I did not say so, madame."

"But you think it, nevertheless?"

"I think, madame, that if there is anything of importance you wish to say to my brother, the undertaking in which he is about to engage is sufficiently dangerous to make it advisable for you to transmit your wishes or commands to him either in writing or by word of mouth."

"Very well, monsieur, then I will ask you to give me five minutes."

With the slow and deliberate step habitual to her, the countess left the room. As she closed the door behind her, the young man glanced anxiously at his watch.

"It's a quarter-past nine," he muttered, "and the king expects me at half-past. Fortunately, it is only a step from here to the Tuileries."

The countess did not even take so much time as she had mentioned, for in a few seconds she returned with a sealed letter in her hand.

Isidore extended his hand to take it.

"Wait, and do not forget what I am about to say to you. If your brother — if the Comte de Charny — should accomplish his undertaking without any accident befalling him, you are to say to him nothing except what I have already told you; that is, you are merely to tell him how much I admire and respect his loyalty and devotion, as well as his many other noble traits of character. If he should be wounded, — dangerously wounded," here Andrée's voice changed slightly, — "ask him to grant me the privilege of going to him. If he will, you can surely send a messenger to tell me where I can find my husband, and I will go to him at once. Should he be wounded unto death," — here her voice failed her utterly, for a moment, — "you are to give him this letter. If he is unable to read it himself, you may read it to him, for I wish him to know its contents before his death. Upon your honour as a gentleman, will you promise to do what I ask, viscount?"

Isidore's emotion equalled her own as he again extended his hand for the letter.

"I promise on my honour, madame."

"Then take the letter and go, viscount."

The young man imprinted a respectful kiss upon her hand, and withdrew.

"Ah!" exclaimed Andrée, sinking back upon the sofa, "if he should die, I want him to know how much I loved him."

At the very same moment that Isidore left the countess with the precious letter concealed in his breast, two other

men, clad in precisely the same costume, were making their way towards the place of meeting agreed upon, that is to say, the queen's boudoir. One was traversing that portion of the Louvre now used as a picture gallery, at the farther end of which he found Weber awaiting him. The other was ascending the same narrow stairway Charny had used on his return from Montmédy, and at the head of the stairs he, too, found a guide awaiting for him in the person of François Hué, the king's valet; so the two men were ushered into the boudoir almost simultaneously, though by different doors. The first to enter was Monsieur de Valory, and he started violently on seeing his counterpart come in; but taking it for granted that they were both summoned for the same purpose, the two officers bowed, and then approached each other.

A moment later another door opened, and the Vicomte de Charny appeared. He had no acquaintance with the other men; but he alone of the three knew why they had been sent for, as well as the task that was before them, and it is quite probable that he would have promptly enlightened his future comrades, had not still another door opened and the king appeared before them.

"Gentlemen," said his Majesty turning to Valory and Malden, "you will pardon me, I trust, for having thus disposed of you without your permission, but I supposed you faithful servants of royalty inasmuch as you both formerly belonged to my body-guard; so I ventured to request you both to call upon a certain tailor, in order that each of you might have a courier's suit made, and then come to the Tuileries this evening at half-past nine o'clock. Your presence here indicates that you are willing to accept the mission I see fit to intrust to you, whatever it may be."

Both gentlemen bowed low before their sovereign.

"Sire, your Majesty knows perfectly well that he has no need to consult his gentlemen, but that their devotion

and their lives are entirely at his service, to dispose of as he sees fit," said Valory.

"In answering for himself, sire, my comrade answers for me and for this other gentleman as well, I presume," added Malden.

"This other gentleman, whose acquaintance I can heartily commend to you, is the Vicomte Isidore de Charny, whose brother was killed at Versailles while defending the queen's apartments. We are accustomed to such devotion on the part of the members of his family, but we are none the less grateful to them!"

"From what your Majesty says, I judge that the viscount knows the object of our meeting, while we are ignorant of it, and would like to be enlightened as soon as possible."

"You are perfectly well aware, gentlemen, that I am virtually a prisoner," began the king, "and I depend upon you to rescue me from this humiliating position, and to assist me in regaining my liberty. My fate, as well as that of the queen and our children, is in your hands. Preparations for our immediate departure have been made, only you must assist us in getting away."

"You have only to give your orders, sire," said both young men, in the same breath.

"We cannot all leave the palace together, gentlemen, as you will very readily understand. Our place of meeting is to be on the corner of the Rue St.-Nicaise, where the Comte de Charny will be waiting for us with a hired carriage. You, viscount, will take charge of the queen, and answer to the name of Melchior; you, Malden, are to take charge of Madame Elizabeth and Madame Royale, and call yourself Jean; you, Monsieur de Valory, will have charge of Madame de Tourzel and the dauphin, and call yourself François. Do not forget your new names, and remain here until you receive further instructions."

And, after offering his hand in turn to each of the three men, the king withdrew.

Meanwhile, Choiseul, who had announced to the king the evening before, on behalf of Monsieur de Bouillé, that it would be impossible to defer the departure later than midnight of the twentieth, and that if he did not receive word to the contrary he should start at four o'clock on the morning of the twenty-first with the detachments of troops for Dun, Stenay, and Montmédy, — Choiseul, as we have before remarked, was at his house on the Rue d'Artois, where he was to await his sovereign's final orders; and as it was after nine o'clock, he was beginning to despair, when the only servant he had retained, came in and informed him that a messenger from the queen desired an interview with him.

Choiseul ordered him to be ushered in, and a man entered, enveloped in an immense overcoat, with a soft hat pulled far down over his eyes.

"Ah, Léonard, so you have come at last. I have been waiting for you very impatiently," exclaimed the duke.

"If I have kept you waiting, monsieur, it is not my fault, but the queen's, for she did not tell me until about ten minutes ago that I was to come here."

"Did she tell you nothing more?" inquired Choiseul.

"Certainly, sir. She intrusted all her diamonds to me, and told me to give you this letter."

"Hand it over then," said the duke, half angrily, for he was anything but pleased by the air of importance the royal messenger gave himself.

The letter was long and full of directions. It announced that the royal family would leave at midnight, and advised Choiseul to start at once, taking Léonard, who had received orders, the queen wrote, to obey the duke as he would obey her.

The following words, underscored, were appended to the letter: "*I hereby renew this order.*"

The duke surveyed Léonard, who was waiting with evident anxiety. The barber looked grotesque enough under his enormous hat, and almost lost in a big overcoat with a number of capes.

"Now try to get your wits together," exclaimed the duke. "What did the queen tell you?"

"I can repeat it word for word."

"Go on, then; I am listening."

"She sent for me three-quarters of an hour ago, monsieur —"

"Very well."

"And said to me in a low voice —"

"Her Majesty was not alone, then?"

"No, monsieur. The king was talking with Madame Elizabeth in the alcove. The dauphin and Madame Royale were playing together. As for the queen, she was leaning against the mantel —"

"Go on, Léonard, go on."

"Well, the queen said to me in a low tone, 'Léonard, I am sure I can rely upon you.' — 'Dispose of me as you please, Madame,' said I; 'your Majesty knows that I am devoted to you, body and soul.' — 'Then take these diamonds,' says she, 'and hide them in your pockets. Take this letter, too, and carry it to the Duc de Choiseul on the Rue d'Artois.' Then, as I was about starting to carry out the queen's orders, her Majesty called me back and said: 'Put on a broad-brimmed hat and a big overcoat, so that nobody will recognise you, my dear Léonard, and obey Monsieur de Choiseul exactly as you would obey me.'"

"So the queen bade you obey me exactly as you would obey her!"

"Those were her Majesty's very words, monsieur."

"I am glad you remember her verbal instructions so well. But here is the same order in writing; and as I am obliged to burn this letter, you had better see for yourself."

And Choiseul handed the letter to the barber, who read the following lines aloud: —

"I have instructed my hair-dresser, Léonard, to obey you exactly as he would obey me. I HEREBY RENEW THAT ORDER."

"You understand, do you not?" asked the duke.

"As if her Majesty's verbal order would not be sufficient, sir!" protested Léonard.

"No matter."

And he burned the letter.

Just then, the servant entered, and announced that the carriage was ready.

"Come, Léonard," said the duke.

"What ! am I to go with you ? And the diamonds ?"

"You are to take them with you."

"And where ?"

"Where I take you."

"And where are you going to take me ?"

"Many leagues away, to fulfil a special mission."

"Impossible, monsieur."

"And why ? Did not the queen tell you to obey me exactly as you would obey her ?"

"That is true. But how can I do it ? My brother and I have rooms together ; I left the key in the door of our lodgings, and when my brother goes home he won't find either his hat or riding-coat, for I appropriated them both. Besides, he won't have any idea where I am. And then, there's Madame de l'Aage, whose hair I promised to dress, and who is waiting for me now."

"Never mind, my dear Léonard, your brother will have to buy another hat and coat, and Madame de l'Aage will have to wait until some other day for you to dress her hair."

And without paying any further attention to Léonard's protests and expostulations, the duke forced the disconsolate hair-dresser to enter the cabriolet which was in waiting, and then started his horse off at a brisk trot in the direction of the Barrière de la Petite Villette.

The duke had scarcely passed the last houses of the Petite Villette when a party of five men who were sauntering down the Rue St. Honoré on their way home from a meeting of the Jacobin Club, began to comment upon the unusual beauty and tranquillity of the night. These five men were Danton, Fréron, Chénier, Legendre, and Desmoulin, who himself relates the incident.

As they reached the corner of the Rue de l'Echelle, Desmoulins remarked, glancing towards the Tuileries: "Upon my word, Paris is as quiet to-night as if it were deserted. Not a single policeman have we seen during our entire walk."

"That's because arrangements have been made to leave the way clear for the king, perhaps."

"What? to leave the way clear for the king, did you say?"

"Undoubtedly, as he starts to-night."

"You're joking," exclaimed Legendre.

"It may be a joke, but I was so informed by letter," replied Fréron,— "an anonymous letter, though. I have it with me. Here, see for yourself."

The five men approached a hack that was standing at the corner of the Rue St. Nicaise, and by the light of its lamps read the following:—

"Citizen Fréron is hereby informed that Monsieur Capet, the Austrian woman, and their two brats will leave Paris to-night to join General de Bouillé, the butcher of Nancy, who is awaiting them on the frontier."

"*Monsieur Capet!* That's a good name for him," exclaimed Desmoulins. "I'll call him that, henceforth, instead of Louis XVI."

"There's only one objection," remarked Chénier. "The family name of Louis XVI. is not Capet, but Bourbon."

"Nonsense! Who cares for that? Only two or three bookworms like Chénier, perhaps."

"But what if the contents of this letter are true, and this is really the night the entire gang intend to decamp?"

"As we are close to the Tuileries, suppose we go and see," suggested Desmoulins.

And the five patriots amused themselves by making the circuit of the palace.

On their way back they met Lafayette and his staff entering the Tuileries.

"There is Blondinet going in to put the royal family to bed," exclaimed Danton. "Our labors are ended ; his are just beginning. Good-night, gentlemen. Who is going my way?"

"I," responded Legendre.

And the party separated, Danton and Legendre crossing Carrousel Square, while Chénier, Fréron, and Camille Desmoulins turned the corner of the Rue de Rohan into the Rue St. Honoré.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE DEPARTURE.

At eleven o'clock that evening, just as Mesdames Tourzel and Brennier, after having undressed and put Madame Royale and the dauphin to bed as usual, woke them up again and proceeded to dress them in their travelling costumes,—greatly to the disgust of the dauphin, who stoutly insisted upon putting on his own clothing instead of the feminine habiliments provided for him,—the king, queen, and Madame Elizabeth received a call from Lafayette and his aides, Gouvion and Romeuf.

This visit was the more alarming on account of the warning Madame de Rochereul had given the authorities. The queen and Madame Elizabeth had taken a drive in the Bois de Boulogne that evening, returning about eight o'clock. Lafayette inquired if the drive had been a pleasant one, and remarked that he feared the queen had been imprudent in remaining out so late, as the evening fogs might be bad for her.

"Fog on a June evening!" exclaimed the queen, laughing. "I can't account for it, unless it was made expressly to conceal our flight, for I suppose the rumour that we are about to run away is still rife."

"The truth is, there is more talk than ever upon that subject, madame," replied the general. "In fact, I have been informed that your departure is certainly to take place to-night."

"I suspect it is from Monsieur de Gouvion that you have heard this piece of good news," retorted the queen.

"And why from me, madame?" inquired that young officer, blushing.

"Because I hear you are well informed of all that goes on here at the palace. Now, here is Monsieur Romeuf, who is not so greatly favoured. He will vouch for us, I am sure."

"I should deserve no great credit if I did, madame, inasmuch as the king has given the Assembly his word of honour that he shall not leave Paris," responded the young man.

It was the queen's turn to blush now, and the conversation was promptly diverted into other channels. About half-past eleven the general and his aides took leave of the king and queen, whereupon Gouvion, by no means reassured, returned to his room in the palace, where he found his friends on the watch; but instead of relieving them, he only urged them to increased vigilance.

As for Lafayette, he went to the Hôtel de Ville to relieve Bailly's mind concerning the king's intentions, though that was hardly necessary, as Bailly evidently felt no misgivings on that score.

As soon as Lafayette left them, the king and queen summoned their attendants as usual, and after the customary services were rendered, dismissed them all at the regular hour.

Then the queen and Madame Elizabeth assisted each other to dress. Their gowns were exceedingly plain, and both wore large bonnets that nearly concealed their faces from view.

They had just finished dressing when the king came in. He wore a grey coat and one of those bag periwigs named after Jean Jacques Rousseau. He also wore grey knee-breeches, grey stockings, and buckled shoes.

For a week Hué, the king's valet, dressed in a costume identical in every respect, had been going in and out of the apartments formerly occupied by M. de Villequier, who had left the country several months before. This precaution had been taken in order to accustom persons to seeing a man in this garb moving about this locality, so that no one would be likely to notice the king when he passed out.

The three couriers were brought from the queen's boudoir into the parlour of the suite of apartments occupied by Madame Royale. This suite of rooms adjoined the apartments formerly occupied by Villequier; and as the king was in possession of the keys of the vacant rooms, there would probably be no difficulty in getting out of the palace, especially as the sentinels were in the habit of seeing a good many persons leave the Tuileries shortly after the clock struck eleven, for many of the royal attendants did not sleep in the palace, and so repaired to their lodgings after the duties of the day were over.

On assembling in Madame Royale's parlour, the final arrangements for the journey were concluded. Isidore de Charny, who had gone over the route with his brother and knew all the dangerous places, was to ride on ahead and notify the postilions, so that there should be only the least possible delay in changing horses.

Malden and Valory, who were to occupy the back seat on the top of the coach, were to pay the postilions thirty sous a piece, — five sous more than usual, on account of the extra size and weight of the coach. They were also to receive handsome *pourboires* if they made good time.

The elder Charny would be inside the vehicle, ready for any emergency. He, as well as the three couriers, would be well armed.

By paying the postilions extra, and thus insuring a fairly good rate of speed, the party hoped to reach Châlons in thirteen hours. Each person having promised to adhere faithfully to his part of the programme, the candles were extinguished, and the party entered the Villequier apartments just as the clock struck twelve; hence the Comte de Charny must have been at his post more than an hour already.

Feeling his way cautiously along through the darkness, the king at last found the door leading into the corridor. He was about to insert the key in the lock when the queen suddenly checked him.

They all listened, and could distinctly hear laughter and footsteps in the corridor beyond. Something unusual was going on. Madame de Tourzel, who lived in the palace and whose presence in the corridor even at that hour was not likely to arouse suspicion, volunteered to go back and ascertain the cause of this unusual commotion.

The others awaited her return in breathless silence; and the more profound the stillness, the more evident it became that the corridor was occupied by several persons.

Madame de Tourzel soon returned, and reported that she had seen Gouvion and several other men in uniform in the passage.

It was evidently not advisable to venture out into the corridor, so Madame Elizabeth went back into Madame Royale's bed-chamber to obtain a candle; and by its light the party endeavoured to find some other place of egress.

For some time the search was fruitless, and at least a quarter of an hour was lost in this way; but at last they discovered a narrow stairway leading to an isolated room on the floor below. This room had been occupied by Monsieur de Villequier's servant, and a door opened from it into the servants' hall.

This door was locked. The king tried all the keys on his ring, but not one would open it. Isidore attempted to push the bolt back with the blade of his knife, but it resisted his efforts.

The king took the candle from Madame Elizabeth's hand, and, leaving the party in darkness, went back to his bedroom, and thence by the private stairway to his workshop. There he secured a bunch of picks of different sizes and shapes, and then came down again. Before rejoining the party, he had decided which pick to try. It entered the keyhole easily, caught the bolt, and then let it slip twice; but the third time the king pressed it so hard that after a second or two the bolt flew back, the latch yielded, and everybody drew a long breath of relief.

"Is n't this something worth knowing, madame?" asked Louis, turning to the queen, with a triumphant air.

"Yes," replied the queen, laughing. "I never, however, said it was a bad thing to be a locksmith, but that it was much better to be a king."

Madame Elizabeth ventured out first, leading Madame Royale. They were followed at a distance of about twenty yards by Madame de Tourzel and the dauphin. Between these two couples walked Monsieur de Malden, ready to assist either party if necessary.

The poor children, with their protectors, went timidly out on tiptoe into the circle of light made by the lamp burning over the door that led into the courtyard, and passed the sentinel quietly and unnoticed.

"Good!" murmured Madame Elizabeth; "there is one difficulty well over."

At the archway leading into Carrousel Square, they saw a sentinel whose line of march directly crossed their path. On seeing them, he paused.

"Aunt, we are lost; that man knows us," whispered Madame Royale, pressing her companion's hand.

"Never mind, my child; we shall certainly be lost if we hesitate," replied Madame Elizabeth; so they continued on their way.

When they were within about four yards of the sentinel, he turned his back upon them, and they hurried by.

Did this man really know them? The ladies were convinced that he did, and bestowed a thousand benedictions on their unknown preserver as they hastened on.

They could see Charny's anxious face on the other side of the wicket. The count was enveloped in a big riding-coat.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, "you are here at last! But the king and queen, where are they?"

"They are following us."

"Come, then," said Charny, hastily leading the way to a hack in waiting on the Rue St. Nicaise.

During his absence another carriage had driven up and stopped behind the first.

"Take that cab, Malden," whispered Charny, "and go straight to the Porte St. Martin. You will have no difficulty in recognising the coach that is waiting for us there."

Malden understood, and jumped into the carriage; and the driver, supposing him to be some footman going to meet his master at the play, for the opera was at the Porte St. Martin in those days, drove off without further parley.

The carriage had hardly turned the corner of the Rue de Rohan when a man dressed like a clerk emerged from the same gate through which the others had passed. This man wore a grey coat, his hat was pulled far down over his eyes, and he kept his hands in his pockets as he sauntered along. It was the king, closely followed by Valory.

Charny advanced a few steps to meet him. "This way, sire," he said respectfully. "And the queen?" he added to Valory, in a lower tone.

"She is coming with your brother Isidore."

"Very well; take the shortest cut, and wait for us at the Porte St. Martin."

Valory hurried away, and the rest of the party waited anxiously for the arrival of the queen.

A half hour passed. Charny, upon whom the burden of responsibility rested, was almost crazy. He wanted to return to the palace and make inquiries, but the king would not permit it. The dauphin wept, and begged for his dear mamma. Neither his sister, aunt, nor governess could comfort him.

The alarm of the party increased when they saw Lafayette's carriage, accompanied by torch-bearers, returning that way.

This is what had happened. On reaching the courtyard, the Vicomte de Charny, who had given his arm to the queen, evinced an evident intention to turn to the left; but his companion stopped him.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"To the corner of the Rue St. Nicaise, where my brother is waiting for us."

"Is that on the bank of the river?"

"No, madame."

"But it is at the gate on the river-bank opposite the quay that your brother is to wait for us."

Isidore tried to insist; but the queen seemed so sure of what she said that he began to distrust his own memory.

"For God's sake be careful, madame," he exclaimed. "A mistake might prove fatal."

"Let us go to the river-side. I am certain I heard your brother say we were to meet him on the bank of the river."

"Very well, madame, for that is only on the other side of the palace; but if we do not find the carriage there, we will go to the Rue St. Nicaise at once, shall we not?"

"Yes, yes; but let us lose no time."

The queen led the way through the three courtyards, which were separated, at that time, by thick walls, but opened one into the other by narrow passageways close to the palace, each passageway being protected by a chain and guarded by a sentinel.

The queen and Isidore passed through one after another of these openings. They were obliged to climb over the chains, but no sentinel checked their progress. Why, indeed, should any one suppose for a moment that this young woman attired like a servant in some respectable household, and accompanied by a handsome young fellow in the Prince of Condé's livery, was the queen of France?

When they reached the bank of the river they found the pier deserted.

"The carriage must be on the other side of the river!" exclaimed the queen.

Isidore wished to go back at once; but the queen, as if seized by a sort of hallucination, persisted in leading Isidore further on towards the Pont Royal.

But on crossing this bridge, they found the quay and

the other bank of the Seine as lonely and deserted as the spot they had just left.

"Let us try that street," said the queen, dragging Isidore towards the Rue du Bac.

But after going a hundred yards she was obliged to acknowledge that she must have been mistaken, after all, and paused, panting for breath, for her strength was beginning to fail her.

"I give it up. Take me where you please," she gasped.

"Courage, madame, in Heaven's name!"

"It is not courage I lack, but strength," panted Marie Antoinette; and as she turned to retrace her steps she murmured, "Good heavens! it seems to me I shall never recover my breath again."

Isidore knew that in such an emergency breath was as essential to the queen's safety as it is to a fawn pursued by the hounds, so he paused and said, —

"Stop and take breath, madame; we have plenty of time. I will answer for my brother. He will wait until daylight if necessary."

"You are sure then that he loves me?" his companion cried, quickly and imprudently.

"I know that his life, like my own, belongs to you, madame, and that the love we both feel for you amounts to positive adoration in him."

"Thank you. I can breathe again, now. Let us hasten."

She retraced her steps with feverish haste; but after recrossing the bridge, Isidore led his companion into the Place du Carrousel instead of through the courtyards. Until midnight this big square was usually filled with hackney coaches and stands for the sale of small articles; but it was wellnigh deserted now, and correspondingly gloomy.

They could distinctly hear the roll of carriage-wheels and the clatter of hoofs, however, and when they reached the Rue de l'Echelle it was evident that the equipage from which these sounds proceeded was coming swiftly towards

them, for the light of the torches that accompanied the carriage was already visible.

Isidore wanted to beat a retreat; but the queen insisted on going forward, so Isidore sprang in front of her to protect her, just as the horses' heads appeared at the other end of the arch. But though he pushed the queen close back against the wall, the entire archway was flooded with light from the torches.

In the midst of this imposing cavalcade, half reclining in his carriage, arrayed in the superb uniform of Commander-in-Chief of the National Guards, Lafayette could be plainly seen.

Just as the carriage passed, Isidore felt himself pushed aside by a determined, if not sturdy arm, — the left arm of the queen.

In her right she had a small bamboo cane with a gold handle, such as most fashionable women carried in those days, and with this she gave the carriage-wheels a vigorous rap, exclaiming as she did so, —

“Go thy way, gaoler; I'm out of thy prison-house now.”

“What are you doing, madame? Think of the risk you are running!” gasped Isidore.

“I am avenging myself,” responded the queen. “It is worth risking a good deal to do that.”

And as soon as the last torchbearer had passed, she sprang out from her hiding-place, radiant as a goddess and joyous as a child.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A QUESTION OF ETIQUETTE.

THE queen had not gone ten steps beyond the archway when a man enveloped in a big coat seized her unceremoniously by the arm and hurried her towards a hack that was standing at the corner of the Rue St. Nicaise.

This man was the Comte de Charny, and the hack was one in which the rest of the royal family had been waiting for more than half an hour. They had expected to see the queen arrive half-fainting and terrified; but, instead, she made her appearance laughing and even jubilant. The dangers through which she had passed, the fatigue to which she had been subjected, the alarming mistake she had made, the time she had lost, the serious delay she had caused, were all forgotten in the rap of the cane she had given Lafayette's carriage-wheels; for it seemed to her almost as if she had bestowed the blow upon him.

A servant was holding a horse by the bridle a few yards from the carriage; and Charny had no sooner pointed the animal out to Isidore than the viscount sprang upon his back, and was off at full speed, for he was to ride on ahead as far as Bondy in order to have horses in readiness there.

"Come, madame, we have not a second to lose," said Charny, with that firmness mingled with deference which really strong men display in an emergency.

The queen entered the carriage in which the other five members of the party were already seated, and took the dauphin on her lap. The king was beside her, and Madame Elizabeth, Madame Royale, and Madame de Tourzel sat facing them.

Charny closed the door and climbed upon the box; then, to put spies on the wrong track, in case any should be lurking about, he turned the horses around, drove up the Rue Saint Honoré as far as the Madeleine, and then by way of the boulevards to the Porte St. Martin.

On arriving there, the count jumped down and opened the door of the hack. The door of the large coach which had been built expressly for the journey was already open, and Malden and Valory, who had reached the spot nearly an hour before, were standing by the steps on either side of the vehicle.

In a second the six persons who had come in the hack were on the ground, and Charny drove the hack to the side of the road and dexterously overturned it into a ditch.

Then he hastened back to the coach and attached his horses to that. The king entered it first, then the queen, then Madame Elizabeth; after Madame Elizabeth, the two children stepped in, and after the two children, Madame de Tourzel.

Malden climbed to the back seat on the top of the coach, and Valory seated himself beside Charny on the box.

It was a quarter past one by the clock in the Church of St. Laurent when the four horses attached to the coach started off at full speed.

It took just one hour to reach Bondy. There they found fresh horses with harnesses on their backs, all ready to be hitched to the coach. Isidore was standing by the horses' heads.

On the other side of the road stood a cabriolet drawn by two post-horses. In this cabriolet were two waiting-maids in the service of the dauphin and Madame Royale. They had expected to find a carriage for hire in Bondy, but failing to do so, they had purchased this cabriolet of its owner and paid him a thousand francs for it.

This worthy, well pleased with his bargain, and anxious, doubtless, to see the persons who were such simpletons as

to give a thousand francs for such an old rattle-trap, was hanging about the post-house.

He saw the king's coach arrive, driven by Charny, who jumped down and approached the door of the carriage. He wore his uniform under his big overcoat, and his hat was in a box under the seat. It had been decided between the king and queen and Charny that the latter was to take a seat inside the vehicle at Bondy, in place of Madame de Tourzel, who would then return to Paris.

But they had neglected to consult the lady in question with regard to this arrangement.

The king now submitted the question to her. Despite her devotion to the royal family, Madame de Tourzel was as finical as old Madame de Noailles in all matters of etiquette.

"Sire," she replied, "it is my duty to watch over the royal children of France, and not to leave them for an instant, except at the express order of your Majesty, — an order which would be wholly unprecedented, however; so I shall not leave them."

The queen was fairly trembling with impatience. She wished to have Charny inside the coach, for two reasons. As a queen, she felt him to be a most efficient protector; as a woman, she found in him her greatest happiness in life.

"My dear Madame de Tourzel," she said, "we are really very grateful to you, but you are not at all well, and you are carrying your devotion too far. Remain in Bondy, and wherever we may be, you shall rejoin us later."

"Madame, if the king so commands, I am ready to alight and remain in the middle of the road, if need be; but a clearly expressed order of the king will alone make me consent, not only to fail in my duty, but renounce my rights."

"Sire!" exclaimed the queen, "sire!"

But Louis XVI. dared not decide so momentous a question, and cast wildly around for some excuse, some loophole of escape.

"Can you not remain on the box, Monsieur de Charny?" he asked.

"I can do anything the king desires," replied Charny; "only I shall either have to wear my uniform,—and everybody along the route is familiar with that, having seen me so often upon the road during the past year,—or else this box-coat and oilcloth hat; and this last costume is much too plain for such a stylish equipage."

"Come inside, Monsieur de Charny, come inside, by all means," urged the queen. "I will take the dauphin on my lap, Madame Elizabeth can take little Marie Thérèse on hers, and we shall get along very well. We shall be a trifle crowded, that is all."

Charny waited for the king to decide, however.

"Impossible, my dear, impossible!" exclaimed his Majesty. "You forget that we have a journey of ninety leagues before us!"

Madame de Tourzel arose from her seat, ready to obey the king's order and alight, if his Majesty so decided; but the king dared not give the order, so great is the importance court people attach to such trifles.

"Can't you take your brother Isidore's place, count," suggested the king, "and ride on ahead to order the horses?"

"I am ready and willing to do anything, your Majesty, as I said before; only I must beg your Majesty to recollect that post-horses are generally ordered by a courier, not by a naval officer. This deviation from custom would be likely to surprise the superintendents of the stations, and might lead to serious difficulties."

"That is true," said the king.

"Good heavens!" muttered the queen, almost beside herself with impatience. Then, turning to Charny, she added: "Arrange it as you please, count, but I should much prefer you not to leave us."

"That is my wish also, but I see only one way to prevent it."

"And what is that? Tell me at once, I beg of you."

"It is this, that I should accompany you, or rather follow your carriage, in the plain dress of a man who is travelling by post. Continue your journey, madame, and before you have gone ten leagues I shall not be more than five hundred yards behind your coach."

"You intend returning to Paris?"

"Certainly, madame; but as far as Châlons your Majesty has nothing to apprehend, and I shall rejoin you before you reach that town."

"But how will you get back to Paris?"

"On the horse my brother has been riding. He is an excellent roadster, and has had time to rest. I shall reach Paris in less than half an hour."

"And then?"

"Then I shall put on suitable clothing, hire a post-horse, and ride with a free rein until I overtake you."

"Is there no other way?" asked the queen, despairingly.

"It seems to be really the best plan under the circumstances," commented the king.

"We have no time to lose," exclaimed Charny. "The horses are ready. Here, Jean and François, take your places. Ride on ahead, Melchior! Postilions, to your horses!"

Madame de Tourzel reseated herself in triumph, and the coach started off at a gallop, followed by the cabriolet.

Meanwhile, how were things progressing in Paris, whither Charny was hastening?

A wigmaker named Buseby, residing on the Rue de Bourbon, had chanced to spend the evening at the Tuileries with a friend on guard there. He of course heard a good deal said in relation to the king's contemplated flight; and though his wife laughed at the absurdity of the rumour when he told her of it, on his return home, he could not divest himself of the idea that there was at least some foundation for the report. He undressed and went to bed; but ere long these convictions became so strong that he

sprang up, dressed himself, and hastened to the house of a friend named Hucher, and imparted his suspicions to him. Hucher shared his neighbour's apprehensions on the subject, and after making a hasty toilet rushed out and aroused about thirty of his neighbours.

All this happened about a quarter past twelve o'clock, just after the queen's encounter with Lafayette.

The citizens who were thus rudely awakened from slumber by Buseby and Hucher, put on their uniforms as members of the National Guard, and called upon General Lafayette to inform him of what was going on.

They reached Lafayette's residence, on the Rue St. Honoré, about half-past twelve o'clock.

The general, after seeing the king safely in bed and notifying Bailly of the fact, paid a short visit to Monsieur Emmery, a member of the National Assembly. He then returned home, and was preparing to retire for the night, when a loud knock was heard at the door. The general sent his valet to ascertain what was the matter, and the man soon returned with the intelligence that twenty-five or thirty citizens wished to see the commander-in-chief on a matter of importance; so Lafayette, who was then in the habit of holding a reception at any hour of the day or night it seemed necessary, slipped on his coat again, and gave orders that his visitors should be admitted.

Buseby and Hucher acted as spokesmen; but the general only laughed at their fears. Being a good-natured man and a great talker, he explained how the report had originated, and how, to satisfy himself that there was not the slightest foundation for it, he had visited the palace at a late hour of the night, and remained there until he had seen the king go to bed exactly as they themselves would see Lafayette go to bed, if they remained much longer. But as even this failed to reassure them entirely, Lafayette added that he would answer with his life for the king and the entire royal family.

It was impossible to express any doubts after this assur-

ance, so the citizens contented themselves with asking Lafayette to give them the password, so that no one could molest them on their way home, and the general did not have the heart to refuse them this slight favour.

Armed with the countersign, they decided to visit the Hall of Assembly as well as the palace courtyards, to see if anything unusual was going on in either place.

They had reached the Rue de l'Echelle when a horseman, coming at full speed, rode directly into the midst of them. On such a night every incident seemed portentous, so they crossed their muskets before him, and ordered him to halt.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"We want to know where you are going?"

"I'm going to the Tuileries."

"What is your business there?"

"I have to render an account to the king of a commission he intrusted to me."

"At this hour of the night?"

"Most assuredly."

"But at this hour the king is in bed."

"Yes, but they will wake him."

"If your business with the king is so important, you must have the countersign."

"Not necessarily; for I might have come from the frontier, instead of from only three leagues away; and I might have been gone a month, instead of two hours."

"True," said one of the men.

"Then you saw the king two hours ago?" inquired one of the others.

"Yes."

"And talked with him?"

"Yes."

"What was he doing?"

"He was only waiting for Lafayette to leave, to go to sleep, I should judge."

"Then you have the password?"

"Of course. The general, knowing I could not get back to the Tuileries before one or two o'clock in the morning, gave me the password, so that I might have no trouble."

"And the password is?"

"Paris and Poitiers."

"That's all right. *Au revoir*, comrade. Tell the king you found us watching at his palace gates, so that he might not run away."

As they spoke they divided, to let the rider pass.

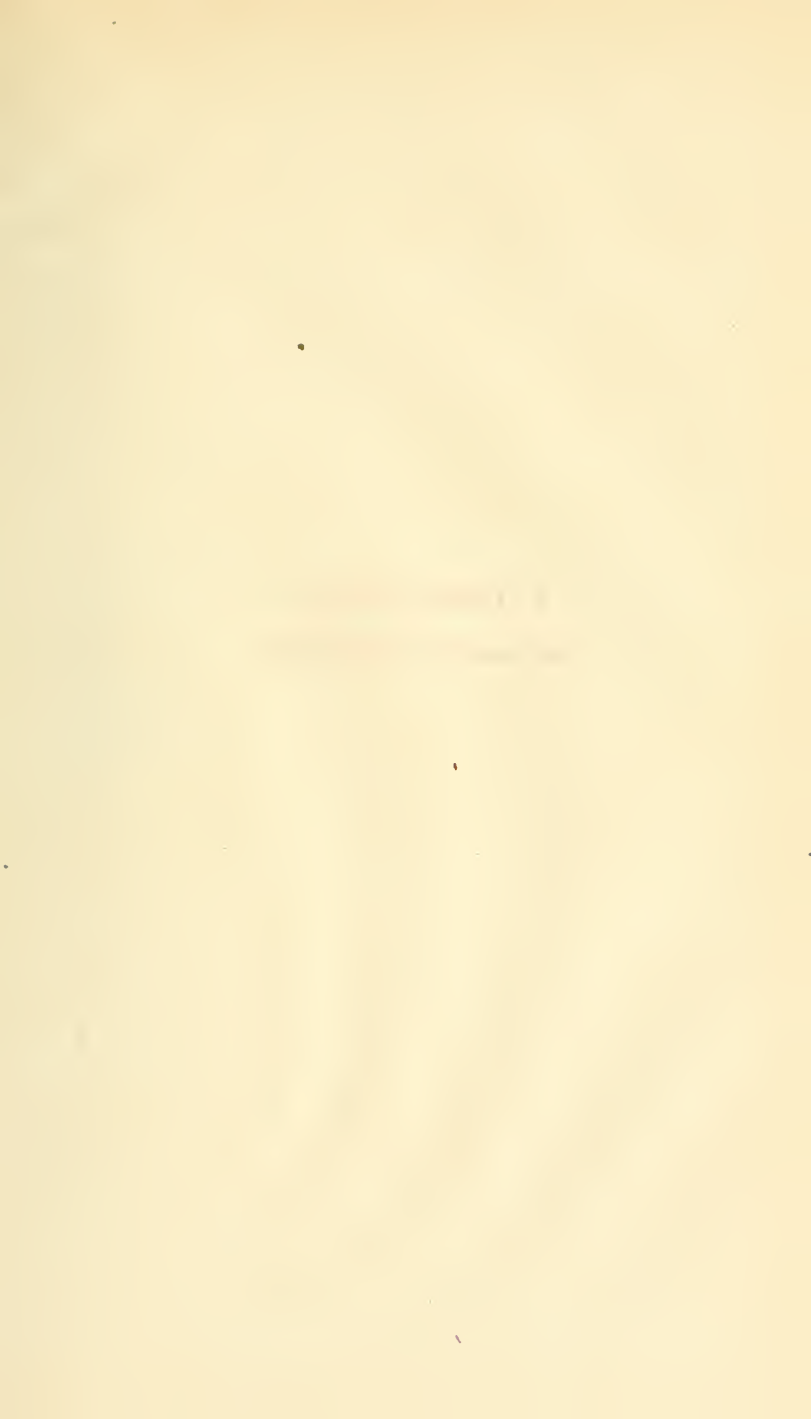
"I will not fail to do so," he responded; and, touching his horse with the spur, he shot through the gateway of the Tuileries and disappeared from their sight.

"Had n't we better wait until he comes out, and inquire whether he saw the king?" asked one of these astute citizens.

"But if he has lodgings in the palace we shall have to wait until to-morrow," remarked another.

"True," responded the first speaker. "And now, as Lafayette's abed, and the king's abed, suppose we follow their example, not forgetting to shout 'Hurrah for the Nation!' first, however."

The twenty-five or thirty patriots repeated the cry in unison, and then returned to their beds, happy and proud at having heard from Lafayette's own lips that there was not the slightest danger that the king would leave Paris.



Portrait of Louis XVI.

Engraved by W. Wellstood.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

EN ROUTE.

It was about three o'clock in the morning, and day was beginning to dawn, when the royal family reached Meaux, where they were to change horses. The king was hungry, and determined to make an attack on the provisions, which consisted of some cold veal, bread, and champagne, which had been placed in a hamper under the box by Charny.

As no knives or forks had been provided, the king was obliged to ask Malden for his hunting-knife to cut the meat.

"Won't you take something too, Malden?" whispered the monarch; but Malden declined.

While this was going on, the queen leaned out of the window and gazed back over the road they had just travelled, probably to ascertain if Charny was in sight.

"A penny for your thoughts, madame!" exclaimed the king.

"Mine? Oh! I was thinking of Lafayette," responded her Majesty, trying to smile. "He is probably feeling rather uncomfortable about this time." Then, turning to Valory, who was standing near the coach, she remarked: "François, it seems to me everything is going on very well, and that we should have been stopped before this time if we are likely to be stopped at all. Our departure cannot have been noticed."

"I think so myself, madame, for I have seen nothing of a suspicious character anywhere. Courage, madame, and all will be well!"

"All ready," cried the postilions; so Malden and Valory climbed to their seats again, and the coach drove on.

About eight o'clock in the morning they reached the foot of a long hill. A thick wood, in which the birds were singing merrily, bordered both sides of the road.

The postilions checked their horses, and the two guardsmen clambered down from their seats.

"Stop the carriage, Jean!" said the king, "and open the door. I want to walk awhile; and I think the queen and the children won't be sorry to have a little exercise, too."

Another moment, and the entire royal party was scattered over the highway. The little dauphin began to chase butterflies, and his sister to gather flowers. Madame Elizabeth took the king's arm, and the queen walked on alone.

Seeing this family thus scattered along the road, the lovely children running and playing, the sister leaning on the arm of her brother and smiling up in his face, the beautiful and pensive woman glancing behind her now and then, the whole scene illuminated by the sunshine of a perfect June morning, and the forest throwing its transparent shadows half-way across the road, — beholding this scene, one would have supposed this was some happy family returning to their château to resume a contented and peaceful life, not the King and Queen of France fleeing from a throne to which they were speedily to be restored, only to be subsequently led to the scaffold.

Suddenly the queen paused, as if her feet had become rooted to the earth. A horseman had appeared, a quarter of a league away, enveloped in a cloud of dust raised by his horse's feet. She dared not say, "There is Charny!" but a faint cry escaped her, and she exclaimed, "Ah, news from Paris!"

Every one turned, except the dauphin. He had just caught the butterfly he had been chasing, and cared little for any news from Paris.

The king, who was slightly near-sighted, drew a small lorgnette from his pocket.

"I do believe it is Charny!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sire, it is."

"Let us walk on. He will soon overtake us."

The rider was indeed Charny, and he overtook them at the top of the hill, where the coach again halted.

He wore a tight-fitting green riding-coat with a rolling collar, a hat with a broad band and steel buckle, a white vest, and high military boots which reached above his knees. His usually pale face was flushed by his rapid ride, and his eyes shone brilliantly. Never had the queen seen him look so handsome, and she heaved a deep sigh. He sprang from his horse and bowed low to the king, then turned and saluted the queen.

The entire party gathered around him, with the exception of the two guardsmen, who held themselves discreetly aloof.

"Approach, gentlemen, approach!" cried the king. "Monsieur de Charny's news interests each and every one of us."

"First, sire, all goes well," said Charny, "and at two o'clock this morning no one even suspected your departure."

Everybody drew a long breath of relief. Then the questions multiplied.

Charny related all the incidents of his return to Paris, — how he had encountered the party of patriots on the Rue de l'Echelle, how they had questioned him, and how he had convinced them that the king was in bed and asleep.

Inside the Tuileries, he had found everything as quiet as usual. He went up to his room, changed his clothing, came down again through the king's corridor to satisfy himself that no one, not even Monsieur Gouvion, suspected the flight of the royal family.

Then he again mounted his horse, and, thinking he should probably have considerable difficulty in procuring another steed at the post-house at that hour of the night, he decided to set out for Bondy on the same animal he had been riding so long. There he obtained a fresh horse and continued his journey. Nothing of a disquieting nature had occurred on the road.

The queen extended her hand to Charny. The bearer of such good news certainly deserved some reward. The count kissed his sovereign's hand respectfully. Why did the queen turn pale? Was it for joy because Charny had pressed her hand?

The party re-entered the carriage. It started again, and Charny galloped along beside it.

At the next post-station, they found coach-horses in readiness, but there was no saddle-horse for Charny, Isidore not being aware that his brother would need one; so it was decided that Charny should follow, not accompany the royal coach, keeping within sight of it, and exchanging a few words with its occupants when they stopped to change horses.

Charny secured a fresh mount at Montmirail, and he supposed the royal party was at least fifteen minutes in advance of him, when, on suddenly turning the corner of a street, his horse almost ran his nose into the coach, which was standing still in the middle of the road.

A trace had broken, and the guardsmen were trying to mend it. Charny hastily dismounted, and, going to the carriage, advised the king to keep out of sight, and bade the queen not be at all uneasy. Then he opened a box, in which he had placed such materials and implements as he thought might be needed in case of an accident. There he found a pair of traces, one of which he took to replace the broken one.

The two guardsmen took advantage of this opportunity to ask for the loaded pistols which had been placed in the carriage. But the king objected; and when it was suggested that an attempt might be made to detain him by force, the king replied that under no circumstances would he permit blood to be shed on his account.

In two hours they were in Châlons.

"If we reach Châlons safely, all will be well," the king had said more than once. They had reached Châlons, and no attempt had been made to impede their progress.

They changed horses again here, and the king leaned out of the carriage-window for an instant.

In the crowd that had gathered around the coach were two men who gazed at the king intently. One of these men suddenly disappeared; the other drew nearer the carriage.

"Sire," he said, in a low tone, "don't show yourself in this way, or you are lost!" Then he called out roughly to the postilions: "Hurry up, you rascals! is this the way you treat travellers who are paying you thirty sous apiece?" And he, too, set to work assisting them. This man was the superintendent of the post-house.

At last the horses were harnessed, and the postilions sprang into their saddles. The first postilion tried to start the two head horses, but both fell down. Under repeated blows of the whip they managed to struggle to their feet, and the carriage started; but almost at the same instant the second postilion's horses fell, with him underneath them.

Charny pulled the fellow out from under the horses, but his boots were left behind.

"What kind of horses are these you have given us?" cried Charny, indignantly, knowing nothing of the proof of loyalty the man had just given.

"The very best in the stable," was the reply.

The horses were so entangled in their traces that the more the postilions tried to free them, the worse the situation of affairs became.

Charny at last seized the traces, exclaiming, "Let us unharness, and begin again. We shall gain time by it."

The superintendent, too, set to work again, almost weeping with chagrin and vexation.

Meanwhile, the man who had disappeared from the post-house had rushed to the residence of the mayor and informed him that the king and the entire royal family were getting a relay of horses at the post, and begged him to give orders for their detention.

Fortunately, the mayor was not a very ardent republican,

and did not care to assume such a responsibility; so, instead of consenting to do what the man asked, he insisted upon all sorts of explanations, as if to satisfy himself beyond a doubt of the truth of these statements, and did not go to the post-house until he was compelled to, and that was just as the coach was disappearing round the corner.

Still, nearly twenty minutes had been lost, and the occupants of the royal coach began to feel somewhat alarmed. Those four horses, falling one after another without any apparent cause, reminded the queen most unpleasantly of the four candles that went out so mysteriously the first night she spent in the Tuileries, nearly two years before.

Still, as they drove out through the gates of the town, the king, the queen, and Madame Elizabeth all exclaimed as with one accord: "We are safe!" But a hundred yards further on a man rushed up, and, putting his head in at the window, called out, —

"Your plans were not well arranged. You are sure to be arrested."

The queen uttered a faint scream. The man sprang aside, and in another instant had vanished from sight in a neighbouring grove.

Fortunately it was barely four leagues to Sommeville Bridge, where they would find Choiseul with his forty hussars; but it was now three o'clock in the afternoon, and they were nearly four hours behind time.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FATE.

THE reader will recollect that the Duc de Choiseul was travelling by post in company with Léonard the hairdresser, who was greatly exercised in mind at having left the door of his lodgings unlocked, at having carried off his brother's riding-coat, and at having failed to keep his promise to dress Madame de l'Aage's hair.

The only thing that consoled him was the duke's assurance that he was only taking him two or three leagues from home in order to give him a special commission from the queen, after which he would be set at liberty.

At Bondy, seeing the vehicle was about to stop, he felt much relieved, and was preparing to get out, when the duke checked him by telling him that this was not the place.

Horses had been ordered in advance. In a few seconds they were harnessed to the carriage, and the vehicle was off again like a flash of lightning.

"But where are we going, then, monsieur?" inquired poor Léonard.

"What does it matter where we are going, provided you are able to start on your way back by to-morrow morning?" inquired Choiseul.

"Not much, if I can get back to the Tuileries by ten o'clock, in time to dress the queen's hair —"

"That will satisfy you then?"

"Of course; though if I could get home a little earlier, so that I could pacify my brother and explain to Madame de l'Aage, it would n't be a bad idea."

"Then you need n't worry, my dear Léonard," responded the duke. "You'll find that everything will turn out for the best."

Léonard consequently had no idea that the duke intended to kidnap him altogether, and became quite tranquil in mind, at least for awhile; but seeing fresh horses put to the carriage at Claye, and hearing nothing said about stopping, the poor fellow exclaimed, "Ah, monsieur, are we going to the ends of the earth?"

"Listen, Léonard," the duke said, much more seriously. "I am not taking you to some country-house near Paris, but to the frontier."

Léonard groaned, and, placing his hands on his knees, gazed at the duke in evident terror. "To — to the frontier?" he faltered.

"Yes, my dear Léonard, for I expect to find there, with my regiment, a letter of the greatest importance from the queen. Not being able to deliver it myself, it was necessary for me to have some one upon whom I could depend to do it. I begged the queen to name some one, and she mentioned you as one whose devotion made him well worthy of such a trust."

"Oh, of course, monsieur, I am very proud that the queen considers me worthy of her confidence; but how shall I get back to Paris? I'm in my pumps and my white silk stockings, and I have neither a change of linen nor any money with me."

The poor fellow actually forgot that he had two million francs' worth of diamonds in his pockets.

"Don't worry about that, my friend," said the duke. "I have everything you need here in the carriage, — shoes, linen-clothing, and money; so you will want for nothing."

"I may want for nothing, monsieur; but think of my poor brother, whose hat and overcoat I have appropriated, and poor Madame de l'Aage, who will never allow anybody but me to dress her hair. Oh, heavens! how will all this end?"

"For the best, for the best, my dear Léonard. At least, I hope so."

They flew along like the wind. Choiseul had ordered his courier to have two beds and a substantial supper awaiting them at Montmirail, where they were to spend the night; and Léonard was partially consoled, or at least he occasionally let fall a word that betrayed that his pride was flattered, at having been selected for such an important mission.

After supper, the travellers went to bed, the duke having ordered the carriage to be in readiness at four in the morning. Fifteen minutes before that time, they were to knock at his door and wake him, in case he was asleep.

It was nearly three o'clock, and Choiseul had hardly closed his eyes, when he heard the sound of wheels, accompanied by those loud cracks of the whip with which postilions announce the approach of new-comers.

To spring from his bed and rush to the window was the work of an instant only.

A cabriolet was at the door. Two men in the uniform of the National Guard stepped out, and imperiously demanded horses. Who were these men, and why were they in such a hurry for their horses?

Choiseul called his servant and bade him have their own horses harnessed at once; then he aroused Léonard. Both men had gone to bed with their clothes on, and were consequently ready to start in a moment. When they went downstairs both vehicles were ready; but Choiseul told the postilion to let the guardsmen's carriage go first. He intended, however, to follow it so closely as not to lose sight of it for an instant.

He carefully examined the pistols which had been placed in the carriage-pockets, and renewed the priming, thereby causing poor Léonard dire misgivings.

They travelled on in this way about a league or a league and a half, when the cabriolet in front of them turned into a cross-road between Etoges and Chaintry. The guardsmen

proved to be merely two peaceable citizens who had been to Ferté and were now returning to their homes.

Choiseul continued his journey in a more contented frame of mind, and at ten o'clock they passed through Châlons, and at eleven reached Sommeville Bridge.

The detachment of hussars had not yet arrived; but the duke asked for a room, and then put on his uniform. Léonard watched these preparations with evident anxiety and alarm, and his heavy sighs really touched the duke's heart, so at last he said to him:—

"Léonard, I think it is time to let you know the truth."

"The truth! What! do you mean I don't know it now?"

"Only partially. I will tell you the rest now."

Léonard clasped his hands despairingly.

"You are devoted to your royal master and mistress, are you not?" continued the duke.

"In life and in death."

"In two hours they will be here."

"My God! is it possible?" exclaimed the poor fellow.

"Yes, with the children and with Madame Elizabeth.

You know what dangers they have incurred."

Léonard bowed his head in token of assent.

"And what dangers are still before them!"

Léonard lifted his eyes heavenward.

"Well, in two hours they will be safe."

Léonard could not answer. His eyes were full of tears.

"In two hours — here — " he faltered, at last. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, in two hours. They left the Tuileries at eleven o'clock last night, or shortly afterwards. They are due at Châlons at noon to-day. Allowing them an hour and a half to travel the four remaining leagues, they should be here in two hours. Let us order dinner. I am expecting a detachment of hussars under command of Monsieur de Goguelat to arrive at any moment. We will make the dinner as long as possible."

"I am not at all hungry, monsieur," interrupted Léonard.

"Never mind. If you try hard, I'm sure you will be able to eat a little. You see we must make the dinner last as long as possible, so as to have an excuse for remaining. Eh! what's that? Why, that is the hussars coming now." For the ring of horses' hoofs could be distinctly heard, as well as an occasional blast from the bugle.

Another moment, and Goguelat had entered the room and handed Choiseul a package from Monsieur de Bouillé. This package contained six blank orders, all bearing the king's signature, besides a duplicate of the king's order to all officers of the army, whatever their rank might be, to obey the Duc de Choiseul.

Choiseul had the horses picketed, ordered rations of bread and wine served to the hussars, and then sat down to his own dinner.

The news Goguelat brought was not encouraging. All along the route he had found the people in a state of great excitement. Rumours of the king's flight from the country had been rife for more than a year, not only in Paris, but in the provinces; and the detachments of troops just stationed at Sainte Menehould had increased their suspicions. He had even heard the tocsin sounding in one village through which he passed.

All this was more than enough to impair Choiseul's appetite; and after a half hour spent at the table, he rose, and, leaving Monsieur Boudet in command, walked up the street to a hill near the bridge, which commanded a good view of the road for a distance of nearly two miles. He could see no signs of either coach or courier, but this was not surprising. If he made any allowance for even trifling detentions, he could not expect the courier until at least an hour later; and the king was not likely to arrive in less than half an hour after the courier.

Two hours passed, and still no sign of what the duke was looking for appeared. Every five minutes Choiseul pulled out his watch, and every time he did so, Léonard exclaimed: "They're not coming! Oh, my poor mistress,

my poor mistress ! Some misfortune has certainly befallen them ! ”

And the poor fellow's despair increased Choiseul's anxiety not a little.

Half-past two came, and three, and half-past three, and still no courier, no coach ! The reader, however, will recollect that it was three o'clock when the king left Châlons.

But while Choiseul was thus watching and waiting, Fate was busy bringing about an event which was destined to exert a powerful influence in the drama we are relating. Fate had so decreed that, a few days before, the peasantry on the estate of a certain Madame d'Elbœuf, residing near the Sommeville Bridge, had refused to comply with certain demands on the part of the owner, who had threatened to call in the soldiery to enforce her claims ; but the Federation had borne its fruits, and the inhabitants of the neighbouring hamlets had promised to aid the Elbœuf peasantry if this threat was carried into execution.

Seeing the hussars arrive at the post-station, the peasantry supposed they had come with hostile intentions.

Messengers were hastily despatched to the neighbouring villages, and by three o'clock the tocsin began to sound throughout that entire region of country.

Hearing the alarm-bells, Choiseul hurried back to the post-house, where he found Lieutenant Boudet very uneasy. Bitter threats had been uttered against the hussars, who were extremely unpopular. The peasants, in fact, openly defied them, and sang contemptuously, under their very noses, this improvised ditty : —

“ The hussars, though they're big and tall,
Really don't frighten us at all.”

Other persons, who were either better informed or more discerning, began to whisper that the hussars had not come to meddle with the Elbœuf peasantry, but to meet the king and queen.

This was the condition of affairs when four o'clock came, without bringing either news or courier.

M. de Choiseul decided to wait a while longer, however; but he had horses put to his carriage, took the diamonds into his own charge, and started Léonard himself off towards Varennes, bidding him be sure and see Monsieur Dandoins at Sainte Menehould, Monsieur Damas at Clermont, and young Jules de Bouillé at Varennes, and explain the situation fully to them.

In order to quiet the increasing excitement, Choiseul announced that the hussars were not there to interfere with Madame Elbœuf's tenantry, but to act as escort for a large sum of money the minister of war was sending to the army.

This explanation did not have the desired effect, however; and in a quarter of an hour the hostile throng that surrounded Choiseul and his men had increased in number to such an alarming extent that the duke saw that if the royal party should come while this state of affairs lasted, he would be unable to render them adequate protection with the small force at his command.

He was there to see that the king's coach proceeded on its way unhindered; but his presence now, instead of being a protection, was a positive source of danger. The best thing to do, even in case the king should come, was to get the soldiers away. In fact, their departure would leave the road clear; but he must needs devise a plausible pretext for their departure.

The superintendent was standing in the midst of a crowd of about five hundred curious men who would be converted into enemies by a single imprudent word. He was standing with folded arms, watching like the others, but he happened to be under the duke's very nose.

"Have you heard anything about a large sum of money being sent to Metz about this time?" Choiseul inquired of him.

"The diligence that passed here this very morning carried a hundred thousand crowns," replied the superintendent. "It was guarded by two gendarmes."

"Indeed!" exclaimed M. de Choiseul, fairly dazed by the kindness with which Fate was treating him.

"Yes, it is true, for Robin and I acted as escort," remarked a gendarme, who was standing near by.

Whereupon Choiseul turned quietly to Goguelat and said: "Well, if the minister of war prefers that mode of transportation, there is no longer any use of our staying here, and I think we might as well be off. Hussars, saddle your horses."

The hussars were nothing loath, for they, too, were becoming uneasy. A minute more, and they were in their saddles. Choiseul passed along the line, cast one more glance at the Châlons road, and sighed. Then, clear and distinct, came the command, —

"Hussars, form into fours! Forward!"

They dashed over the Sommeville Bridge just as the church clock was striking half-past five.

Two hundred yards from the village, Choiseul turned into a cross-road so as to avoid Sainte Menehould, where there was said to be a great deal of excitement.

At that very moment, Isidore de Charny, whipping and spurring a horse which had required nearly two hours to travel ten or twelve miles, rode up to the post-house. While changing horses, he inquired if a squad of cavalry had been seen in the vicinity, and learned that the detachment had started down the Sainte Menehould road barely ten minutes before. He ordered horses for a coach that would soon arrive, and then, hoping to overtake Choiseul, mounted a fresh horse and galloped away.

But, as we have seen, Choiseul left the road to Sainte Menehould a short distance further on, and at the very moment the viscount drew rein before the post-house near Sommeville Bridge; and as the viscount rode straight on towards Sainte Menehould, he did not succeed in overtaking the duke.

CHAPTER XL.

FATE.

TEN minutes after Isidore de Charny's departure, the royal coach arrived, and as Choiseul had foreseen, the crowd had dispersed.

The elder Charny, knowing that the first detachment of troops was to be here at the Sommeville Bridge, did not consider it necessary for him to remain behind; so he galloped up to the carriage to urge on the postilions, who were driving at a slow trot.

When they reached the bridge, the king, seeing neither the hussars nor the duke, began to feel anxious, and put his head out of the window.

"Pray do not show yourself, sire," entreated Charny. "I will make inquiries at once."

He entered the post-house. Five minutes afterwards, he re-appeared, having learned all the particulars. He repeated them to the king, who immediately divined that it was to leave the road clear that Choiseul had left so hastily.

The important thing now was to push on and reach Sainte Menehould as soon as possible, for they would doubtless find Choiseul there with his hussars, and a detachment of dragoons as well.

At the moment of departure, Charny stepped to the carriage window.

"What are the queen's orders?" he asked. "Am I to go on ahead, or follow on behind?"

"Do not leave me!" responded the queen.

Charny bowed to his horse's mane, and galloped along by the carriage door.

Meanwhile, Isidore was riding on in advance, marvelling greatly at the deserted aspect of the road, which was so straight that he could see in some places two or three miles ahead of him. He spurred his horse on anxiously, thus getting farther and farther ahead of the coach; for he feared the inhabitants of Sainte Menehould might take offence at the prolonged stay of Dandoins' dragoons, as the people of Sommeville had taken umbrage at the detention of Choiseul's hussars.

And Isidore was right. The first thing that struck him on reaching Sainte Menehould was the large number of National Guardsmen walking about the streets. In fact, they were the first he had encountered since he left Paris; the entire place seemed to be in a commotion, and he could hear a drum beating at the other end of the town.

He trotted coolly along through the streets, however, without appearing to be in the least disturbed by the excitement around him, and, after crossing the square, stopped in front of the post-house.

As he crossed the square, however, he noticed about a dozen dragoons wearing fatigue-caps seated on a bench; and a few steps from them, at a window on the lower floor of a house, he perceived the Marquis Dandoins, also wearing a fatigue-cap, and holding a riding-whip in his hand.

Isidore passed straight by, however, as if he had not even seen them, for he felt sure that Dandoins would recognise him from his costume, and that consequently no further intimation of the near approach of the royal party would be necessary.

In the doorway of the post-house stood a young man about twenty-eight years of age, attired in a dressing-gown, and wearing his hair *à la Titus*, according to the fashion of the patriots of the time. He also wore a full beard.

Isidore looked around as if in search of some one to whom he could speak.

"What do you desire, monsieur?" inquired the black-whiskered man.

"I should like to see the superintendent of the station."

"He is away just now, but I am his son, Jean Baptiste Drouet. If I shall do as well, tell me what you wish."

The young man emphasised the words Jean Baptiste Drouet, as if he foresaw that these words, or rather these names, were destined to occupy a prominent place in history.

"I want six post-horses for two vehicles that are close behind me!" said the viscount.

Drouet nodded as if to indicate that the courier could have what he wanted; and then, stepping out into the courtyard, shouted lustily:—

"Here, postilions, six horses for two carriages, and a nag for the courier."

Just then the Marquis Dandoins came up hurriedly.

"You precede the royal coach, do you not?" he asked, in a low tone, addressing Isidore.

"Yes, monsieur, and I am much surprised to see you and your men still wearing your fatigue-caps."

"We have received no orders to the contrary, nor have I received any instructions as to the duty my men are to perform. There are threatening demonstrations all around us, and the people here are trying to demoralise my men. What am I expected to do?"

"Why, guard the carriage when the king comes, and be governed by circumstances; then, leave half an hour after the royal family has passed, to act as a rear-guard. But hush!" exclaimed Isidore, interrupting himself suddenly, "they are watching us. Perhaps some one has overheard our conversation. Rejoin your men, and do your very best to keep them up to their duty."

Drouet was, in fact, at the door of the kitchen in which this conversation had taken place.

Dandoins withdrew, and almost simultaneously the cracking of whips was heard, and the royal coach crossed the square and drew up in front of the post-house. A crowd gathered around it.

Dandoins, anxious to explain why he and his men were not under arms, rushed up to the carriage-door, hat in hand, and made his apologies with every possible mark of respect. The king, in answering him, showed his face at the window several times.

Isidore, with one foot already in the stirrup, was standing near Drouet, who was scrutinising the vehicle and its occupants closely. He had attended the great Federation in Paris the summer before, and had then seen the king. He felt sure that this was he.

That very morning Drouet had received a large sum in *assignats*, and he had examined each bill closely, in order to see if any of them were counterfeit; consequently the king's features were distinctly impressed upon his memory, and seemed to cry out to him,—

“This man before you is the king.”

He drew one of these *assignats* from his pocket, compared the portrait upon it with the original, and murmured,—

“It is certainly he !”

Isidore rode around to the other side of the coach, where his brother was standing, partly for the purpose of screening the queen, who was leaning against the window, and hastily whispered to Olivier, “The king has been recognised. Get away from here as quickly as possible, and keep an eye on that black-whiskered fellow over there. He's the son of the superintendent, and it is he who has recognised the king. His name is Jean Baptiste Drouet.”

“All right, I'll attend to him. Be off as quick as you can, my brother.”

And Isidore started off at a gallop to order the relay of horses at Clermont.

He had hardly reached the end of the street before the postilions, urged on by Malden and Valory and by the promise of a crown extra, had everything in readiness, and drove off at a brisk trot.

The count had not lost sight of Drouet for an instant,

but Drouet had not moved. He had merely been talking in a low tone to one of the hostlers.

So Charny stepped up to him and said:—

“Was no horse ordered for me, monsieur?”

“Yes, but there are no more horses.”

“What, no more horses? How about the one they are saddling there in the courtyard?”

“That horse is mine.”

“Can’t you let me have him? I’ll pay you your own price for him.”

“Impossible, monsieur. It is getting late, and there’s a trip that must be made.”

To insist would only increase Drouet’s suspicions; to attempt to take the horse by force would ruin everything. Besides, Charny had thought of another way out of the difficulty.

He went to Dandoins, who stood watching the coach, which was just disappearing around the corner of the street. Feeling a hand on his shoulder, Dandoins turned.

“Hush!” said Olivier, “it is I, Comte de Charny. There is no horse for me at the post-station, they say. Make one of your dragoons let me have his. I must follow the king and queen, for I alone know where to find Choiseul’s relays; and if I’m not at hand, the king is sure to be delayed in Varennes.”

“I’ll not give you one of my men’s horses, count, but my own.”

“I accept your offer. The safety of the king and of the entire royal family is involved. The better the horse, the better their chances.”

Both men walked briskly to the lodgings of the marquis; but before doing so, Charny charged a sergeant to watch Drouet closely.

Unfortunately, Dandoins’ rooms were fully five hundred yards distant, and before the horses had been saddled, at least fifteen minutes had been lost. We say horses, because Dandoins, too, intended to mount and comply with

the king's expressed wish by following his Majesty, and, with his men, constituting a rear-guard for the royal coach.

Suddenly it seemed to Charny that he heard the words: "The king ! the queen !" mingled with other far-off cries, and he hastened out of the house, requesting Dandoins to send his horse to the square. The entire village was in the wildest commotion; for Charny and Dandoins had hardly left the square before Drouet exclaimed, exactly as if he had only been waiting for their departure to spread the news: "That coach which just passed is the king's. The king and queen and the royal children of France are in that carriage."

Then he flung himself upon his horse. Several of his friends tried to stop him.

"Where are you going ? What do you intend doing ?" they exclaimed.

He replied in a whisper, —

"The colonel of those dragoons is over there. There was no way of stopping the king without causing a disturbance that would have turned out badly for us. What I could not do here, I *can* do at Clermont. Detain the dragoons; that is all I ask."

And he started off at a gallop after the king. So it became noised about that the king and queen were in the coach which had just passed through the village; and the rumour spread so quickly that it reached Charny's ears.

Hearing the commotion, the mayor and some of the other municipal officers rushed to the spot, and the mayor ordered the dragoons to retire to their barracks and remain there until eight o'clock.

Charny soon learned all there was to know; namely, that Drouet had recognised the king and ridden away. He fairly stamped with impatience.

Just then Dandoins rejoined him. As soon as he saw him coming, Charny called out from a distance, —

"The horses, where are the horses?"

"They 're bringing them now."

"Have they put my pistols in the holsters?"

"Yes."

"Are they loaded?"

"I attended to that myself."

"Good! Everything depends upon the speed of your horse now. I must overtake a man who has fifteen minutes the start of me, and kill him."

"What! do you mean to kill him?"

"If I don't kill him, all is lost."

"Let us start at once, then."

"Don't trouble yourself about me. You had better stay and attend to your men, who are becoming utterly demoralised here. Look, the mayor is talking to them now. You, too, have no time to lose. Go! go!"

Just then the orderly came up with the two horses; and without stopping to notice which was which, Charny leaped upon the back of the horse nearest him, snatched the bridle from the hand of the orderly, struck his spurs into his horse's sides, and was off like a shot in pursuit of Drouet, but without catching the words Dandoins shouted after him, though the words cast upon the wind were mighty indeed in their import, —

"You have taken the horse I was to ride instead of yours, and the pistols in the holsters are not loaded!"

CHAPTER XLI.

FATE.

MEANWHILE the royal coach, preceded by Isidore, was bowling swiftly along the road from Sainte Menehould to Clermont. Daylight was fast fading away, however, and it was eight o'clock when the carriage reached the Forest of Argonne, through which the highway passed.

The Comte de Charny had not been able to tell the queen the cause of his detention, inasmuch as the royal coach left Sainte Menehould before Drouet had informed Charny that he could not have a horse. As they drove out of the village, however, the queen noticed that her cavalier was no longer at her carriage window; but she could think of no excuse for stopping the vehicle. Once, she fancied she caught sight of a horseman galloping along the road a long way behind them; but this equestrian — if she did see him at all — was soon lost to view in the shadows of approaching night.

And now — for, in order to make the events of this momentous journey clear to the reader, we are obliged to dart from one actor to another — and now, while Isidore was riding a mile in advance of the royal coach, and while the coach was entering the Forest of Argonne, and while Drouet was riding in hot haste after the coach, and the elder Charny was wildly pursuing Drouet, — while all these things were going on simultaneously, the Marquis Dandoins rejoined his men, and ordered the call "To saddle!" sounded; but when the dragoons attempted to advance, the people crowded in around them so that the horses could not move a step.

In this crowd there were at least three hundred National Guardsmen, with their muskets in their hands. To risk an encounter would be to ruin the king; so it seemed best for the troops to remain where they were, and thus keep the people where they were.

So Dandoins condescended to parley with them. He even asked the leaders what they wanted, and what they expected, and the meaning of all these threats and hostile demonstrations.

In the mean time, the king had reached Clermont, where he found Monsieur Damas, with his one hundred and forty dragoons.

If Dandoins had had one hundred and forty men at his disposal, like Damas, he might have been able to accomplish something; but he had only thirty: and what could thirty dragoons do against three or four thousand men? Nothing but talk and parley with them; and that is precisely what Dandoins did.

At half-past nine the royal coach reached Clermont, and the postilions had driven so fast that Isidore was only a few hundred yards in advance of it. In fact, it had only taken the party an hour and a quarter to traverse the four leagues that separated the two villages.

The speed with which they had travelled might explain Charny's continued absence, but he would surely overtake them when they changed horses. Damas, having been warned by Léonard, was lying in wait for the party, and just before Isidore entered the village, Damas, who had recognised the courier's livery, stopped him.

"Pardon me, monsieur, but do you not precede the king?" he asked.

"And you, I presume, are Charles de Damas?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"I do precede the king. Call your men together to serve as a guard for his Majesty's coach."

"There is an alarming scent of insurrection in the air, monsieur, and I am obliged to admit that I cannot vouch

for my men if they should recognise the king. All I can promise is to obstruct the road after the royal coach passes."

"Do your best, monsieur," said Isidore. "Here is the king now," he added, pointing to an incoming coach, whose course could be discerned through the darkness only by the sparks that flew from beneath the horses' feet.

As for Isidore, it was his duty to hasten forward and order relays. In five minutes he drew rein at the door of the post-house. Damas, with five or six dragoons, arrived almost at the same moment.

Close upon Isidore's heels, and before he had time to remount, came the royal coach. The vehicle, though not a magnificent affair, was a little remarkable, and a number of people assembled in front of the post-house. Damas stood some distance from the carriage-door, as if he had no acquaintance with its occupants; but as neither the king nor queen could resist their longing to hear the latest news, the king beckoned to Damas on one side, while the queen beckoned to Isidore on the other.

"Is this Monsieur de Damas?" asked the king.

"Yes, sire."

"Why are your dragoons not here under arms?"

"Your Majesty is five hours behind time. My squadron was in the saddle by four this afternoon. I kept the men under arms as long as possible; but the whole village began to get excited, and even my dragoons began to show that they were upset by all sorts of conflicting conjectures. If a disturbance occurred before your Majesty's arrival, I knew the alarm-bell would be sounded and your progress checked, so I kept only a dozen men under arms and sent the rest back to the barracks; but I kept the trumpeters with me so as to be able to call the men to horse at the first sign of danger. Your Majesty can see that my plan has worked well, as the road is clear."

"Very well, monsieur; I must say you have acted very prudently. As soon as I am well out of the village, have

your men mount and follow my carriage, at a distance of a mile or so."

"Sire, I want you to listen to what Monsieur Isidore says," interrupted the queen.

"What is it?" responded the king, with some slight show of impatience.

"He says you were recognised by the superintendent's son at Sainte Menehould. The viscount is sure of it, for he saw the young man comparing your face with the portrait engraved on an *assignat* he had in his hand. He says, too, that he informed his brother, the count, of the fact, and that as we have seen nothing of him since, there must have been some serious trouble."

"If we have been recognised, there is all the more need that we should make haste. Monsieur Isidore, hurry up the postilions, and then ride on ahead as fast as you can."

Isidore's horse being ready, he sprang into the saddle and called out to the postilions: "The road to Varennes!"

Damas stepped back, bowing respectfully, the postilions whipped up their horses, and the coach was off in the twinkling of an eye. As they left the village, they met a sergeant of hussars just entering it.

For an instant, Damas was strongly tempted to follow the royal coach with the few men then at his disposal; but the king had given contrary orders, and he thought it his duty to obey those orders, especially as there were signs of commotion in the town. People were running from house to house, and persons and lights could be plainly seen moving hurriedly about in the dwellings. Damas was firmly resolved to prevent one thing, — the sounding of the alarm-bell; so he ran to the church to guard the door. Besides, Dandoins might arrive with reinforcements at any moment.

The excitement gradually subsided, however; so at the end of about fifteen minutes Damas returned to the public square, where he found Major de Noirville, to whom he gave his instructions, bidding him get the men under arms at once.

Just then some one came to inform Damas that a messenger from Dandoins was waiting for him at his lodgings.

This messenger came to say that it would not be advisable to wait for Dandoins or his dragoons, Dandoins being forcibly detained by the people of Sainte Menchould; and that besides this — as Damas knew already — Drouet had started off at full speed after the royal coach, though he had probably not succeeded in overtaking it, as he had not been seen in Clermont.

Damas had scarcely finished listening to this report when another messenger from an entirely different direction was announced. This messenger was an orderly sent by the officers in command of the troops at Varennes, our friends Monsieur Jules de Bouillé and Monsieur de Raigecourt. Seeing the hours drag by without bringing any one connected with the royal party, these young gentlemen had finally determined to send a messenger to Damas to ascertain if he had heard anything of the king.

“What was the condition of affairs when you left Varennes?” inquired Damas, eagerly.

“Perfectly quiet.”

“Where were the hussars?”

“At the barracks, with their horses all saddled.”

“Did you meet any vehicles on your way here?”

“Yes, one large coach drawn by four horses and another with two.”

It will be recollected that the queen’s attendants occupied the second carriage; and though no allusion has been made to the cabriolet for some time, it was never very far behind the royal coach.

“Those are the very carriages you came to inquire about,” replied Damas. “So everything is all right.”

So Damas returned to his quarters and ordered the trumpeters to sound the call to saddle. It was his intention to follow the king to Varennes and give him armed assistance there, should necessity require it. In five minutes the trumpets sounded the call. Everything was

progressing well, aside from the detention of Dandoins and the thirty men under his command; but having one hundred and forty men himself, Damas felt that he could manage very well without any increase of numbers.

Let us now return to the king's coach, which on leaving Clermont took the road to the left leading to Varennes, not the right-hand road leading to Verdun.

We have already described the topographical situation of Varennes, which is divided into the Upper and Lower Towns. We have also stated that it had been decided to change horses at the farther end of the town, and that in order to reach that point it would be necessary to leave the main road, reach the bridge by another route, cross the bridge under the old tower, and so meet Choiseul's relays on the other side, where they would be waiting in charge of Jules de Bouillé and Raigecourt. As for young Rohrig, an officer about twenty years of age, the managers of the affair had not taken him into their confidence, and he still believed the troops had been sent there to guard a large sum of money destined for the army.

After their arrival at this dangerous point, the reader will recollect that Charny was to act as guide through the labyrinth of cross-roads; for Charny had spent a fortnight at Varennes, carefully studying and mapping out the entire route, so that there was not a milestone or a lane with which he was not familiar.

But, unfortunately, Charny was not at hand, and the queen's anxiety increased greatly; for under these circumstances the count's failure to rejoin the party must be due to some serious accident.

As they approached Varennes, the king, too, became more and more uneasy; for, depending upon Charny so implicitly, he had not brought the count's maps with him. Besides, the night was very dark, with no light but that of the stars, — one of those nights when a person is liable to lose his way even in a locality with which he is perfectly familiar.

Isidore's orders, received directly from his brother, required him to stop on the outskirts of the town. Here the elder Charny would change horses and assume charge of the party.

His brother's absence troubled Isidore as much as, and perhaps even more than, it did the queen. His only hope now was that Jules de Bouillé or Monsieur de Raigecourt, in their impatience, would come to meet the king and wait for him on this side of the town. During the two or three days they had spent there, they must have become thoroughly acquainted with the town and its surroundings, and so be able to serve as efficient guides.

On reaching the bottom of the hill, and perceiving several lights, which indicated that the town was near, Isidore paused irresolutely and gazed about him; but he could distinguish nothing in the profound darkness.

Then he called softly, and afterwards more loudly, the names of Bouillé and Raigecourt, in the hope that they might be somewhere about. There was no response; but he could hear the rumble of the coach, nearly a mile away, which sounded like distant thunder coming nearer and nearer.

There was nothing for him to do but wait, so he waited. In five minutes the coach reached the spot where Isidore was watching, and the king and queen both thrust their heads out of the window, and asked in the same breath:

"Have you seen your brother?"

"I have not, sire; and as he is not here, he must have met with some serious accident in his pursuit of that wretched Drouet."

The queen groaned.

"What are we to do?" asked the king. Then, addressing the two guardsmen, who had alighted, he said: "Do you know anything about this town, gentlemen?"

Both replied in the negative.

"Everything seems to be quiet, sire," said Isidore, "so there cannot be any danger, I think. If your Majesty will

consent to wait here ten minutes, I will enter the town and endeavour to obtain some information in regard to Bouillé and Raigecourt, or at least in regard to Monsieur de Choiseul's relays. Your Majesty cannot recall the name of the tavern where the horses were to be found?"

"Alas! no," replied the king. "I did know it, but I have forgotten it. No matter; go just the same. In the mean time, we, too, will endeavour to secure some information on the subject."

Isidore galloped off towards the Lower Town, and was soon lost to view among the first houses.

CHAPTER XLII.

JEAN BAPTISTE DROUET.

THE king's remark about securing some information where they were, was explained by the close proximity of two or three houses, the outposts of the Upper Town, as it were, which stood on the right-hand side of the road.

Some one was awake, and moving about in the nearest of these houses, as was evident from a light that stole out through the half-open door.

The queen left the carriage, took Malden's arm, and walked towards the house. As they approached it, some one inside closed the door, but not quickly enough to prevent Malden — who divined the inhospitable intentions of the occupant — from springing forward and pushing it open again before the bolt could be slipped into its socket.

Behind this door, trying hard all the while to shut it, stood a man about fifty years of age, clad in slippers and dressing-gown.

It was not without some very natural surprise, of course, that the man saw himself driven back into his own house, and his door pushed open by a strange man accompanied by a woman; but the occupant of the dwelling started violently as he cast a quick glance at the queen, whose face was plainly visible in the light of the candle he held in his hand.

"What do you want, monsieur?" he asked of Malden.

"We know nothing about Varennes, and would be much obliged if you would tell us the way to Stenay."

"And what if my compliance with your request should become known, and ruin me?"

"Ah, monsieur, but even if you should incur some risk in rendering us such a service, you are surely too courteous not to thus oblige a woman who finds herself in a dangerous position."

"Monsieur," replied the man, "the person behind you is no ordinary woman," — and here he placed his mouth close to Malden's ear, — "it is the queen."

"Monsieur !"

"I recognise her."

The queen, who had either overheard or guessed what had been said, drew Monsieur Malden back a step or two, and said: "Before addressing another word to this man, go and tell the king that I am discovered."

Malden obeyed the command instantly.

"Indeed !" said the king. "Then beg the man to come to me at once."

Malden returned to the house, and, thinking further dissimulation useless, said: "The king desires to speak with you."

The man sighed, then kicked off his slippers, and walked to the carriage barefoot, so as to make as little noise as possible.

"Your name, monsieur ?" demanded the king, first of all.

"Préfontaine, sire," answered the man, hesitatingly.

"Who are you ?"

"A major of cavalry and a Knight of the Order of St. Louis."

"In your two-fold character of Major and Knight of the Order of St. Louis, you have twice taken an oath of fidelity to me. It is consequently your bounden duty to assist me out of my present difficulties."

"Certainly ; but I entreat your Majesty to make haste, for some one may see me," faltered the major.

"If any one sees you, so much the better," remarked Malden. "You will never have a better opportunity to show your loyalty."

The major, who did not seem to be of the same opinion, almost groaned. The queen shrugged her shoulders and tapped her foot impatiently.

The king shook his head warningly at her, then, addressing the major, said, —

“Have you chanced to hear of some horses that are waiting here for a passing carriage, or have you seen anything of some hussars who were to reach your town yesterday?”

“Yes, sire, both the horses and the soldiers are at the other end of the town, — the horses at a tavern called *Le Grand Monarque*, the hussars are at the barracks, probably.”

“Thank you, monsieur. Now, return to the house; no one has seen you, so no harm can possibly befall you.”

“Sire —”

The king waited to hear no more, however, but assisted the queen into the carriage, then, turning to the guardsmen, who were awaiting his orders, he said, —

“To the *Grand Monarque*.”

Just then a shadowy steed shot out from the wood and planted itself diagonally across the road as its ghostly rider shouted, —

“Not another step, postilions.”

“And why not?” asked the astonished men.

“Because you are driving the king, who is fleeing from the country. In the name of the Nation I command you not to move.”

The postilions, who had made a movement as if to drive on, paused and murmured, “The king!”

Louis XVI. saw that the critical moment had come, and called out sternly, —

“Who are you that you dare to give such orders here?”

“An humble citizen; but I represent the Law, and speak in the name of the Nation. Postilions, for the second time I command you not to move. I am Jean Baptiste Drouet, son of the superintendent of the post-station at *Sainte Meneshould*.”

"Wretch!" cried the two guardsmen, springing from their seats and drawing their hunting-knives: but before they touched the ground Drouet was riding swiftly towards the Lower Town.

"Oh, Charny, Charny, what has happened to you?" moaned the queen, sinking back in her seat, almost indifferent as to what might befall her now.

What had happened to Charny, and why had he allowed Drouet to thus escape him? It seemed, indeed, to have been Fate against which he had been doomed to contend.

Dandoins' horse was a good traveller, but Drouet had the advantage of a twenty minutes' start over the count. This time must needs be made up. Charny stuck his spurs into his horse's flanks, and the animal started off like the wind.

On the other hand, Drouet, though not aware that he was pursued, was riding at full speed; but he had only a post-horse, whereas Charny's steed was a thoroughbred. The result was that Charny had gained one-third of the distance by the time he had ridden a league. Drouet then discovered that he was pursued, and redoubled his efforts, in order to escape from the rider who threatened to overtake him.

At the end of the second league, Charny was still gaining at the same rate, and Drouet glanced behind again and again with ever-increasing anxiety.

Drouet had started in such haste that he had failed to provide himself with any weapon. The youthful patriot did not fear death, as he proved beyond question afterwards; but he did fear that if he was checked in his course the king would get away, and he also feared lest this splendid opportunity to immortalise his (Drouet's) name would be lost.

He had two leagues more to travel before reaching Clermont; but it was evident that he would be overtaken before the end of the next league, — the third since his departure from Sainte Menchould.

Just then, as if to stimulate his ardour, Drouet scented

the royal coach in front of him. We say "scented," for it was already after nine o'clock and nearly dark, though this was one of the longest days in the year; so Drouet plied whip and spur still more vigorously. The coach was barely three-quarters of a league from Clermont now, but Charny was barely two hundred yards behind him, and Drouet began to despair. Before he could overtake the king, he himself would be overtaken.

A half league from Clermont he heard the ring of Charny's horse's hoofs close behind him, and he must either give up the race or turn and face his pursuer; and Drouet had no weapons with which to risk such an encounter.

Suddenly, when Charny was within about fifty yards of him, Drouet met the postilions returning to Sainte Meneshould with horses which he recognised as those that had been attached to the king's coach.

"Ah, it is you!" he called out. "They took the road to Verdun, did n't they?"

"What?"

"I mean that the carriages you drove took the road to Verdun." And as he spoke he rode by them, urging his horse to a final effort.

"No, the road to Varennes," shouted the postilions.

Drouet uttered a cry of joy. He was saved, and the king was lost.

If the king had taken the road to Verdun, Drouet would have been compelled to follow him along the same road; but the king had chosen to go from Clermont to Varennes, and the road from Clermont to Varennes described an acute angle to the left; so Drouet made for the Forest of Argonne, with which he was thoroughly acquainted; for by taking a short cut through the woods he could save at least a quarter of an hour, besides having the obscurity of the forest to protect him.

Charny, who knew the country almost as well as Drouet, saw that the latter was likely to escape him after all, and uttered a cry of rage, and almost simultaneously with

Drouet urged his horse across the narrow strip of land that lay between the road and the forest, shouting, —

“Stop ! stop !”

But Drouet made no response. Lying upon his horse’s neck, he urged the animal on with whip and spur and voice. If he could only reach the forest, it was all he asked. He did reach it, but only to find himself ten yards from Charny, who drew a pistol and aimed it at him, shouting: “Halt, or you’re a dead man !”

But Drouet only clung still more closely to his horse’s neck, and urged him on.

Charny pulled the trigger; but the sparks of fire as the flint struck the steel served only to illumine the surrounding darkness for an instant.

Enraged by this failure, Charny flung the pistol at Drouet, and drew a second, riding madly after the fugitive all the while. Again he fired, this time through an opening between the trees; but this pistol, too, failed him as the first had done.

Then, and not until then, did he remember that as he galloped out of Sainte Menehould, Monsieur Dandoins had shouted something after him which he failed to understand.

“Ah !” thought Charny, “I took the wrong horse, and he probably called out to me that the pistols on this horse were not loaded. No matter; I will overtake this scoundrel and strangle him with my own hands if need be.”

And he flew on in pursuit of the shadowy form, of which he had just caught another glimpse in the darkness.

But he had hardly advanced a hundred yards into the forest, of which he knew little or nothing, when his horse stumbled, and fell into a ditch. Charny, who was thrown over the animal’s head, jumped up and leaped into the saddle again; but Drouet had disappeared.

It was in this way that Drouet had managed to elude Charny, and so dart across the highway near Varennes like a phantom, and order the postilions not to advance a step farther.

And the postilions obeyed because Drouet had commanded them to pause in the name of the Nation, which had become more potent in the land than that of the king.

But Drouet had scarcely started for the Lower Town before the royal party could hear the hoof-beats of an approaching as well as a departing steed, and Isidore reappeared a moment afterwards.

The information he had secured corroborated that furnished by Monsieur de Préfontaine. The horses were at the other end of the town, in charge of Jules de Bouillé and young Raigecourt; the other officer, young Rohrig, was at the barracks with the hussars. A waiter in a café who was just closing up the establishment for the night had given Isidore these particulars.

Isidore had hoped to bring joy to the hearts of the illustrious travellers, but they seemed to be plunged into a sort of stupor. Préfontaine was filling the air with his lamentations, and the two guardsmen seemed to be savagely threatening something or somebody; so Isidore paused abruptly in the middle of his story, and asked, —

“What is the matter, gentlemen?”

“Didn’t you see a man pass you just now, — a man riding at a gallop?”

“Yes, sire.”

“Well, that man was Drouet,” said the king.

“Drouet!” cried Isidore, his heart suddenly failing him; “then my brother is dead.”

The queen uttered a cry, and buried her face in her hands.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE TOLLGATE TOWER.

THERE was a moment of utter despondency for these unfortunate travellers, thus detained on the highway, and threatened with unknown but terrible perils.

Isidore was the first to rally from the shock. "Sire," said he, "let us cease to think of my brother, living or dead, and think only of your Majesty. There is not a second to lose. The postilions must know the hotel; we will hasten there at once. Postilions, whip up your horses. To the Grand Monarque at once!"

But the postilions did not move.

"Don't you hear me?" thundered Isidore.

"Yes."

"Then why don't you start?"

"Because Monsieur Drouet forbids us to do so."

"What? *Drouet forbids!* When the king commands, and Drouet forbids, you obey Drouet!"

"We obey the Nation."

"Come, gentlemen," cried Isidore to the two guardsmen, "there are times when a man's life counts for nothing. Each of you pick out your man,—I'll take care of this one; then we will drive ourselves."

As he spoke, he collared the postilion nearest him, and lifted his hunting-knife to plunge it into his heart.

The queen saw the blades glitter, and screamed, "Hold, gentlemen, hold!" Then, addressing the postilions, she added: "Fifty louis, my friends, to be divided between you now, and a yearly pension of five hundred francs each, if you save the king."

The postilions were either frightened by the threatening demonstration the young man had just made, or tempted by the queen's munificent offer, for they started their horses, and the journey was resumed.

Monsieur de Préfontaine retreated into his dwelling, and closed and barred the door.

Isidore galloped along in front of the coach. He intended to pass through the Upper Town and cross the bridge. Five minutes would then bring them to the inn.

The coach fairly flew down the hill towards the Lower Town; but as they neared the archway at the end of the bridge they could see that one half of the tollgate was closed. They opened it, but found two or three wagons standing directly in the road.

"Help me, gentlemen," exclaimed Isidore, dismounting, and catching hold of one of the wagons.

Just then the roll of a drum and the notes of an alarm-bell broke the stillness of the air. Drouet's work was accomplished.

"Scoundrel!" hissed Isidore between his clenched teeth, "if I ever find you —"

By an almost superhuman effort he pushed one big wagon aside; Malden and Valory moved another; but the third still obstructed the way.

"Now for the last one," exclaimed Isidore; but as he spoke, four or five muskets were thrust out from between the slats of the third wagon.

"Not another step, or you are dead men!" cried a determined voice.

"Don't try to force a passage, gentlemen, I command you," said the king, putting his head out of the carriage window.

The two guardsmen and Isidore stepped back.

"What is wanted?" demanded the king.

Almost at the same instant a cry of terror resounded from the coach. Several men had stolen up behind the vehicle, and the barrels of several muskets had been thrust

in at the windows. One of these was aimed straight at the queen's breast. Isidore saw her danger, and, springing forward, grasped the muzzle, and turned the weapon aside.

"Shoot, shoot!" cried several voices. One of the men obeyed, but fortunately his gun missed fire.

Isidore raised his arm, and was about plunging his hunting-knife into the miscreant's heart, when the queen stayed his hand.

"In Heaven's name let me put an end to this scoundrel, madame," cried Isidore, frantically.

"No, sheathe your knife. Do you hear me?" responded the queen.

Isidore let the knife fall at his side, but he did not restore it to his belt. "Ah, if I encounter that Drouet —" he murmured.

"As for him," whispered the queen, pressing Isidore's arm forcibly, "as for *him*, — do with him as you will."

"Now, gentlemen, what do you desire?" repeated the king.

"We want to see your passports," responded two or three voices.

"Our passports? Very well. Bring the proper authorities here, and we will show them our passports."

"These are fine goings-on, upon my word!" exclaimed the man whose gun had missed fire, thrusting his head almost into the king's face. But the two guardsmen sprang upon him and felled him to the ground. In the struggle his gun went off, but the bullet hit nobody.

"Halloo! who fired?" shouted another voice.

The man, who was being crushed under the feet of the two guardsmen, groaned, and cried, "Help, help!" Five or six armed men rushed to his assistance; the guardsmen drew their knives and prepared for a fight. The king and queen attempted in vain to quell the disturbance. It was evident that a fierce and deadly combat was about to begin.

At that juncture, two men rushed into the midst of the combatants. One was attired in the uniform of the National Guards, the other wore a tricoloured sash. The man with the tricoloured sash was Monsieur Sausse, the town solicitor; the man in uniform was Hannonet, the commander of the Varennes National Guard. Behind them, about twenty muskets could be seen glittering in the light of two or three torches.

The king saw that immunity from insult, and perhaps his very life itself, depended upon these two men.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am willing to trust myself, as well as the persons who accompany me, to you; but protect us from the brutality of those men."

And as he spoke, he pointed to the men armed with muskets.

"Put down your guns!" cried Hannonet.

The men obeyed, though not without considerable grumbling.

"You must excuse us, monsieur," said the town solicitor, "but it is reported that his Majesty Louis XVI. is fleeing from France, and it is our duty to ascertain if this report is true."

"Ascertain if it is true!" cried Isidore. "If this coach contains the king, you should be at the king's feet; if, on the contrary, it contains only a private individual, what right have you to stop it?"

"Monsieur," said Sausse, still addressing the king, "I am speaking to you. Will you do me the honour to reply."

"Try to gain a little time, sire," whispered Isidore. "Damas and his dragoons must be on the road, and will arrive here soon."

"You are right," answered the king. Then, turning to Sausse, he asked, "If our passports are all right, shall we be allowed to continue our journey?"

"Certainly."

"Then have the goodness to hunt for your passport,

baroness, and give it to these gentlemen," said the king to Madame de Tourzel.

That lady understood what the king meant by telling her to look for her passport; so she began to search, but in places where she knew it was not to be found.

"There, you can see very plainly that they have no such thing as a passport," exclaimed a threatening and impatient voice.

"Indeed we have, gentlemen; but not knowing exactly when and where we should have to show it, the Baroness de Korff put it away somewhere, and cannot recollect just at this moment exactly where she put it."

A sort of howl went up from the crowd, indicating that they were not to be deceived by this subterfuge.

"There is a very easy way out of this difficulty," said Sausse. "Postilions, drive to my shop. The gentlemen and ladies can enter my house, and the whole matter can be settled there. Drive on, postilions! Gentlemen of the National Guard, you may act as escort for the coach, if you wish."

This invitation sounded too much like a command to be declined; besides, any attempt to resist would have been worse than useless, for the alarm-bell was still ringing, the drum beating, and the crowd around the carriage increasing every minute. The coach started.

"Oh, Damas, Damas," muttered the king, "if you would only come before we reach that accursed house!"

The queen said never a word. She was thinking of Charny.

They reached Sausse's store, but they saw nothing of Damas.

What had happened to prevent this gentleman, upon whose devotion the king relied so implicitly, from fulfilling the orders he had received and the promises he had made?

We will explain, in order to cast as much light as possible on every detail of this unfortunate journey, concerning which Michelet says:—

"The true history of that tragical moment when the king was arrested has never been fully known. The chief historians of the trip to Varennes knew nothing about it except from hearsay. The Bouillés, father and son, were not present. Choiseul and Goguelat did not arrive until an hour afterwards. Deslon did not come until even later."

We left Damas ordering the bugler to sound the call, "To saddle!"

As the first blast sounded, he took some money from a drawer in his desk, and at the same time drew out several papers which he was not inclined to either take with him or leave behind him. He was thus engaged when the door of his room was suddenly thrown open, and several of the municipal officers appeared upon the threshold.

One of them approached the count, who, surprised at this unexpected visit, inquired what they desired of him; changing his position as he spoke so as to conceal a brace of pistols lying on the mantelpiece.

"We wish to know why you are leaving just at this time, count?" replied one of the visitors politely, but firmly.

Monsieur de Damas gazed with astonishment at a man who ventured to ask such a question of an officer of high rank in the king's army, but replied, —

"My explanation is very simple, monsieur. I am leaving just at this time because such are my orders."

"And where are you going, Monsieur le Colonel?" persisted the questioner.

Damas looked more and more astonished "Where am I going? In the first place, I don't know; and in the second place, if I did know, I would not tell you."

The officials exchanged glances and encouraging gestures, and the man who had acted as spokesman at first, said, —

"Monsieur le Colonel, it is the wish of the Town Council that you should not leave Clermont this evening, but remain here until to-morrow morning."

Monsieur de Damas smiled the contemptuous smile of a

soldier when he is asked, either through ignorance or in the hope of intimidating him, to do something contrary to military discipline.

"Indeed!" said he, "so it is the wish of the Town Council that I remain here until to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, monsieur, do me the favour to say to the Town Council that I deeply regret being obliged to disappoint them, but no law that I ever heard of authorises the municipal authorities of Clermont to interfere with the movements of troops. As for me, I receive orders only from my superior officer, and here is his order for my departure."

As he spoke, he extended the order. The man nearest him took the document and showed it to his companions; meanwhile, Damas had seized the pistols on the mantel behind him.

After examining the paper in company with his colleagues, the official who had previously spoken said, —

"Monsieur, the more explicit and peremptory this order is, the more it becomes our duty to oppose it; for it certainly commands you to do something which the best interests of France forbid. In the name of the Nation I declare you under arrest."

"And I, gentlemen," retorted the colonel, displaying his pistols and pointing them at the two officials nearest him, "tell you that I am going."

Not being prepared for this warlike demonstration, a feeling of fear, or perhaps of astonishment, caused the officials to retreat out of the colonel's path as he darted out of the room and across the ante-chamber, double locking the door behind him. Rushing downstairs, he found his horse awaiting him at the door, and, jumping on his back, rode at break-neck speed to the square, where, seeing Monsieur de Floirac already in the saddle, he said to him, —

"We must get out of here the best way we can; the important thing now is to save the king."

Ignorant of Drouet's departure from Sainte Menehould, and of the insurrection in Clermont, Damas felt sure the king was safe, as he had passed Clermont and must be nearly at Varennes, where Choiseul's relays were awaiting him, as well as the Lauzan Hussars, under command of Jules de Bouillé and Raigecourt.

Still, to make assurance doubly sure, he called the quartermaster of the regiment to him, and said, "Monsieur Rémy, ride on towards Varennes. Ride as if the very devil was after you, and overtake those carriages which passed through here a little while ago. Your life shall pay the forfeit if you fail to carry out my instructions."

Putting spurs to his horse, the quartermaster darted off, accompanied by his assistants and four dragoons; but when they reached a fork of the road they took the wrong course.

Everything turned out disastrously on that fatal night.

Meanwhile, the cavalry was slowly forming in the square. The officials whom Damas had locked up made their escape without much difficulty by forcing open the door. They stirred up the populace and the National Guards, who assembled much more rapidly and in a much more enthusiastic frame of mind than the dragoons. Wherever Damas turned, he found himself confronted by three or four muskets aimed straight at him; and this was not calculated to make him feel any less anxious.

He perceived that his men were out of sorts, and rode up and down the line, trying to revive their devotion to the king; but they only shook their heads. Though his men were not all assembled, he thought it high time to depart, and gave the order to advance; but not a man moved.

All the while the municipal authorities were shouting, —

"Soldiers, your officers are traitors! they are leading you on to slaughter! The dragoons are true patriots! Hurrah for the dragoons!"

As for the National Guards and the populace, they shouted lustily, —

“Long live the Nation !”

At first Damas, who had given the order to advance in a rather low tone, supposed his men had not heard it; but as he faced about, he saw the dragoons in the rear ranks springing from their horses and mingling with the crowd.

Realising that he could hope for nothing from such men, he summoned his officers with a glance, and said, —

“These troopers are betraying their king. I call upon you, as soldiers and as gentlemen, to follow me to Varennes.”

And, plunging his spurs into his horse’s sides, he dashed through the crowd, followed by Floirac and three other officers: Adjutant Foucq and Sergeants St. Charles and La Potterie. Five or six loyal dragoons also left the ranks and followed them.

A few bullets fired after the heroic fugitives were so many bullets thrown away.

So now we understand why Colonel Damas and his dragoons were not at hand to defend the king when he was stopped under the archway of the old toll bridge at Varennes and forced to leave his coach and take refuge in the house of Monsieur Sausse, the town solicitor.

CHAPTER XLIV.

AGAIN A PRISONER.

THE house of Monsieur Sausse, at least judging from what the illustrious prisoners and their companions in misfortune saw of it, consisted of a grocery shop, in the rear of which, and connected with it by a glass door, was a dining-room, where those seated at the table could see any customers who entered the shop, though warning of their entrance was likewise given by a bell, which was set in motion by the opening of one of those small low doors, with an oval pane of glass inserted in the middle of it, which are still seen in provincial stores, where the owners, either from a spirit of calculation or humility, seem to feel they have no right to screen themselves from the gaze of passers-by.

In one corner of the store was a stairway leading to the floor above, which also seemed to be divided into two rooms: the first apparently a sort of appendage to the shop, it being filled from floor to ceiling with merchandise of divers kinds. The adjoining room, the one over the dining-room, was evidently the bed-chamber of the owner of the establishment, who had been unceremoniously aroused from slumber by Drouet, and whose room still showed traces of the disorder occasioned by this sudden awakening.

Madame Sausse emerged from this room half-dressed, crossed the second, and presented herself at the head of the stairs just as the royal party crossed the threshold of the shop below.

The town solicitor, who had walked on a little in advance, had already entered it.

More than a hundred persons had followed the coach, and were now assembled in front of the house, which faced a small public square.

"Well?" said the king, as he entered.

"You say you have a passport, monsieur. If the lady who claims to be the owner of this coach will be kind enough to produce the document, I will take it to the town hall, where the Council is now in session, and see if it is valid."

As the passport was perfectly regular in every respect, the king motioned Madame de Tourzel to produce it.

She accordingly drew the precious document from her pocket and handed it to Monsieur Sausse, who charged his wife to do the honours of the house to his mysterious guests, and then set out for the town hall.

The municipal authorities were intensely excited, for Drouet was taking part in their deliberations; but when Sausse came in with the passport a breathless silence ensued, for every one present knew that the strangers had been taken to the solicitor's house.

He laid the passport on the table in front of the mayor.

As we have already given the contents of this document, the reader is aware that there is no necessity to repeat it here.

After reading it, the mayor said: "The passport fulfils the requirements in every particular, and is consequently perfectly legal."

"Legal?" repeated seven or eight astonished voices, while as many hands were eagerly outstretched to seize the paper.

"Yes, perfectly legal, as the king's signature too is appended to it." And he pushed the document towards the hands extended for it.

But Drouet almost snatched it from their grasp. "Signed by the king, — that may be," he exclaimed; "but is it indorsed by the National Assembly?"

"Yes," said one of his neighbours, who was looking over

his shoulder, "for there is the signature of the members of one of the committees."

"Granted; but does it bear the president of the Assembly's signature? Besides, that is not the question," continued the youthful patriot. "These travellers are not a Russian lady named Korff, her children, steward, and servants. These travellers are the king and queen and dauphin, Madame Royale, Madame Elizabeth, some other ladies belonging to the palace, and three couriers; in fact, the entire royal family. Now, will you, or will you not, allow the royal family to leave France?"

The question was a difficult one for the officials of a third-rate town like Varennes; and as their deliberations on the subject seemed likely to be prolonged far into the night, the solicitor determined to leave the Council to decide the matter as best it could, and return home.

He found the travellers still standing in the shop. Madame Sausse had urged them to come upstairs, or at least to be seated and have something to eat; but they had declined all these hospitable attentions, for it seemed to them they would somehow be making concessions to those who had checked their progress towards the eagerly desired goal, and they were resolved to suspend all action until the master of the house returned, and reported the decision of the authorities on the important subject of the passport.

At last they saw him making his way through the crowd around the door.

The king advanced a few steps to meet him, and, with an anxiety he vainly endeavoured to conceal, inquired, "Well, how about the passport?"

"The passport has caused a heated discussion, which was still going on when I left."

"And why? It is hardly possible that they can question its validity?"

"No, but they seem disposed to doubt whether it is in the hands of the real Madame Korff; for it is rumoured

that we have the honour of receiving the king and his family within our walls."

Louis XVI. hesitated a moment, and then, as if he had suddenly decided what action to take, replied, —

"Well, monsieur, I *am* the king. This lady is the queen, and these are our children; and I beg you to treat us with that respect which the French people have always shown to their sovereigns."

As we have already remarked, a large number of people had congregated around the door, and the king's words were consequently distinctly heard by some outside as well as by those within.

But though the king uttered the words with dignity, this dignity did not seem to accord with his grey coat, dminity vest, grey breeches and stockings, and the little Rousseau periwig he wore. Think of seeing the King of France in such a guise! The queen noted the unfavourable impression produced upon the crowd, and the blood mounted to her face.

"Let us accept Madame Sausse's invitation, and go upstairs," she remarked.

Monsieur Sausse took a lamp and walked to the stairway to show his illustrious guests the way.

Meanwhile, the news had spread through the town that it was really the king who was in Varennes. There could not be the slightest doubt of the fact, as the stranger himself had admitted it. A few minutes afterwards a man rushed wildly into the council chamber at the town-hall, exclaiming, —

"Gentlemen, the travellers at Monsieur Sausse's house are really the king and the royal family. I just had it from the king's own lips."

"What did I tell you?" cried Drouet.

The greatest confusion prevailed in the streets. The drums were still beating, and the alarm-bells still ringing.

And how did it happen that all this hubbub did not sooner attract to the centre of the town our young friends

Jules de Bouillé¹ and Monsieur de Raigecourt, who were stationed in the Lower Town to await the king's coming.

We will proceed to explain. The two young officers were sitting in the Grand Monarque Inn about nine o'clock, when they heard the sound of carriage-wheels. They rushed to the window. The vehicle was only a cabriolet; nevertheless, the young men prepared to order out the relays if necessary. The traveller, however, was not the king, but a peculiar-looking individual attired in a broad-brimmed hat and a huge overcoat. The officers were about to retire from the window, when the new-comer called out to them, "Say, gentlemen, isn't one of you Monsieur Jules de Bouillé?"

That gentleman hesitated an instant, then replied, "Yes, monsieur, I am he."

"In that case I have something important to say to you."

"I am ready to listen, though I have not the honour of your acquaintance; but allow me to suggest that it would be better for you to alight and enter the inn."

"Certainly, certainly," responded the traveller, promptly.

And he leaped from the vehicle and rushed into the tavern.

Monsieur de Bouillé noticed that the stranger seemed much frightened, or at least greatly excited.

"You will let me have the horses you have here, will you not?" he asked, immediately upon his entrance.

"The horses I have here?" exclaimed Monsieur de Bouillé, considerably alarmed in his turn.

"Yes, yes. You will give them to me, I am sure. You need not conceal anything from me, I know all about it. I am one of the party."

"Permit me to say that my surprise prevents me from replying," answered young Bouillé. "I really have no idea what you are talking about."

¹ It may be well to call the reader's attention to the fact that this is not the Bouillé who has already figured in this narrative, and who succeeded in gaining access to the king's workshop in disguise, but his brother.

"I repeat that I know everything," insisted the new-comer. "The king left Paris last night, but there is no possibility of his completing his journey. I have informed Damas of the condition of affairs; but he can be of no assistance, for his men have mutinied, and there has been almost a riot at Clermont. Why, I could hardly make my way through the place, — I, who am now talking to you."

"But who are you, anyway?" asked Jules, impatiently.

"I am Léonard, the queen's hair-dresser. Is it possible you do not know me? The duke carried me off in spite of my protests. I took the queen's and Madame Elizabeth's diamonds to him; and when I think, monsieur, that my brother, whose coat and hat I appropriated, has no idea what has become of me, and that poor Madame de l'Aage, who expected me to come and dress her hair yesterday, is still waiting for me, — oh, Heavens! what a dreadful condition of affairs all this is!" And Léonard strode up and down the floor, wringing his hands in the most frantic manner.

Young Bouillé was beginning to understand the situation.

"Ah, you are Monsieur Léonard," he exclaimed.

"Certainly I'm Léonard," replied the traveller, — eschewing the *monsieur*, after the fashion of other great men, — "and as you know me now, you will give me your horses, I am sure."

"Monsieur Léonard," responded the young officer, persisting in classing the hair-dresser with ordinary mortals, — "the horses I have are for the king, and no one but the king shall have them."

"But as I tell you that there is no likelihood of the king's getting this far —"

"But the king *may*, Monsieur Léonard; and if he should come and not find his horses, and I should have to confess that I had given them to you, it is quite likely that he would make me pay dearly for my indiscretion."

"Indiscretion? Why, do you suppose, in the critical

situation in which we find ourselves, the king would blame me for taking his horses?"

Young Bouillé could not help smiling. "I don't say that the king would blame you for taking the horses, but I'm dead sure he would blame me for letting you have them."

"The devil! I hadn't looked at the matter from that point of view. So you absolutely refuse to let me have the horses?"

"Absolutely."

Léonard sighed heavily.

"But you'll certainly do your best to get me some?" he said, returning to the charge.

"With the greatest pleasure, my dear Monsieur Léonard."

To tell the truth, Léonard was a very troublesome guest. He not only talked very loud, but accompanied his words with a very energetic pantomime which, thanks to the flapping brim of his big hat and the immense size of his coat, gave him a ridiculous appearance which rather reflected upon his companions.

Jules de Bouillé was consequently anxious to get rid of him; so he sent for the landlord forthwith, and begged him to find some horses that would take Léonard at least as far as Dun; and having done this, he left the hair-dresser to his fate, telling him he really must go and find out what was going on, which was true enough.

The two officers then went to the upper village, passing through it and riding a mile or so beyond it; but as they neither saw nor heard anything, they, too, began to think that the king—who was now seven or eight hours late—would not come at all, and finally returned to the tavern in the Lower Town.

Léonard had just departed. The clock was striking eleven.

Disturbed by what they had heard from the hair-dresser, they had sent an orderly to Clermont about half-past nine. This was the messenger who met the royal coach just as it was leaving Clermont, and who subsequently had a conversation with Colonel Damas.

The young officers waited until midnight, and then lay down with their clothes on.

Half an hour later they were aroused by the sound of the alarm-bell, the beating of drums, and the shouts of the populace. Putting their heads out of the window, they saw that the entire town was in a commotion, and that the people were rushing wildly towards the town-hall.

Many armed men were also running in the same direction, some with muskets, some with double-barrelled guns, others carrying only sabres, scythes, or pistols.

The two young men ran to the stable and ordered out the horses, but finally determined it would be safer to take the horses outside the town; then they went back after their own horses, which had been kept with the king's.

These manœuvres on their part excited considerable suspicion; and in getting away the last time they became involved in a sort of scrimmage, in which two or three shots were fired at them. At the same time they discovered, from the threats and yells they heard around them, that the king had just been arrested and taken to the house of the town solicitor.

Then they took counsel as to what they had better do, — go back to their horses, or endeavour to rescue the king; or should they ride on and try to warn the Marquis de Bouillé, whom they were tolerably sure to find at Stenay, if he was not at Dun.

Dun was only five leagues from Varennes, Stenay was eight. In ninety minutes they could be in Dun; it would take them two hours to reach Stenay.

So they decided upon the second plan; and just as the king decided to enter the solicitor's chamber, they determined to abandon the relays intrusted to their care, and set out at the top of their speed for Dun.

So once again the prompt succour upon which the king implicitly relied failed to reach him.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE LANGUAGE OF DESPERATION.

THE reader doubtless recalls the situation in which Monsieur de Choiseul, commander of the troops at Sommeville Bridge found himself, when, seeing that the insurrection was becoming more formidable every moment, he carelessly remarked that as the treasure he was to guard had already passed, he might as well be off, and then straightway started for Varennes.

But in order to avoid Sainte Menehould, which was already in a state of ferment, he selected a cross-road, taking care, however, to ride slowly as long as he remained on the highway, in order to give the king's courier time to overtake him.

But the courier did not overtake him, and at Orbeval the duke left the main road.

Monsieur de Choiseul firmly believed that the king's progress had been checked by some accident. Besides, even if he was mistaken, and the king was still on the road, would he not find Dandoins at Sainte Menehould, and Damas at Clermont? We know what had happened to both these gentlemen; but Choiseul had no suspicion of the real facts of the case.

By taking the cross-road at Orbeval the duke reached the Forest of Argonne about nightfall, — in fact, at the very time Charny was frantically pursuing Drouet through another part of the wood. In the last village before entering the forest, that is to say, at Neuville, he was obliged to waste half an hour in waiting for a guide; and while he was waiting he heard alarm-bells ringing in the

neighbouring villages, and the four hussars that composed his rear-guard were seized by the peasantry; but Monsieur de Choiseul, being promptly apprised of the fact, charged upon the crowd, and the four prisoners were soon free. From that time the tocsin rang even more furiously however.

The road through the forest was a very bad one, and even dangerous in many places; and either intentionally or unintentionally the guide often led the little party out of the right course. Frequently, too, the hussars were obliged to dismount and lead their horses up or down precipitous hills; often, too, the path was so narrow that they had to move in single file. One hussar fell over a declivity; and as his shouts for aid proved he was not dead, his comrades very naturally refused to desert him. Three-quarters of an hour were devoted to rescuing him; and it was during this very interval of time that the king was stopped in Varennes, forced to alight from his carriage, and enter Sausse's house.

About half-past twelve o'clock, as Jules de Bouillé and Raigecourt were flying along the road to Dun, Choiseul with his forty hussars entered the other end of the town from a cross-road through the forest.

As he neared the bridge, he was greeted with a determined "Who goes there?" from one of the National Guards stationed there.

"France! The Lauzan Hussars!" responded Choiseul.

"You can't pass," answered the sentinel, and he gave the call to arms.

At the same time, Choiseul perceived that the entire town was in the wildest commotion; for armed men could be seen hurrying through the streets, candles gleamed in every window, and the glare of torches filled the streets.

Not knowing what had happened or what all this meant, Choiseul was naturally anxious to secure some definite information concerning the state of affairs; so he asked to be put into communication with the detachment of troops

stationed in Varennes. This request led to a long discussion, but it was finally granted.

Meanwhile, Choiseul could see that the National Guards were making the most of their time by erecting a sort of barricade of branches of trees, and bringing two small guns to bear upon his forty men.

Just as these warlike preparations were completed, a small detachment of hussars arrived from the barracks on foot. They knew nothing except what they had been told, namely, that the king had been stopped and taken to the house of one of the residents of the town. They themselves had been roughly treated by the populace, and compelled to dismount, and they did not know what had become of their comrades.

As they concluded their explanation, Choiseul caught sight of a small body of cavalry advancing through the darkness, and at the same instant heard the challenge, "Who goes there?"

"France!"

"What regiment?"

"*Monsieur's* dragoons."

As these words were uttered, a shot fired by one of the National Guards rang out upon the air.

"Good! here comes Damas with his dragoons!" Choiseul whispered to an officer near him.

Without waiting to hear any more, Choiseul broke away from the two men who were clinging to his bridle, and who called out to him that he ought to obey the municipal officers, and no one else; then he ordered an advance, drove back those who attempted to stop him, and forced his way through the crowd to the public square.

Here he saw the royal coach standing unharnessed, as well as quite a strong guard stationed in front of an unpretentious house.

In order to keep the troops from coming in contact with the populace he rode straight on to the barracks, — which he found empty, — and left his forty hussars there. He

saw two or three grooms standing around, however, and ascertained from them that the hussars stationed there, not knowing what had become of their officers, had gone off with a crowd of citizens that came after them, and were now scattered through the town, drinking with their captors.

This news dismayed Choiseul not a little; for he thus found his force reduced to forty men, whose horses had already travelled over fifty miles that day, so that men and animals were alike exhausted.

The situation did not admit of any hesitation, however. First, he examined the pistols, to see if they were all loaded; then he made a little speech in German to the men, who, as they did not understand a word of French, had very little idea of what was going on around them. He told them that the king and queen and the entire royal family had been arrested, and that it was the duty of the Lauzan Hussars to rescue them from the wretches who held them prisoners, and who perhaps intended to put them to death.

The address was brief, but impassioned, and seemed to make a deep impression upon the hussars.

"*Der König! Die Königin!*" they repeated over and over again, in profound astonishment.

Choiseul did not give their ardour time to cool, but ordered them to draw their sabres and advance by fours, in a brisk trot, to the house where he had seen the guard, feeling positive that the king was there.

Reaching the spot amid the curses and vituperations of the National Guards, — to which he paid not the slightest attention, however, — he posted sentinels at the door and dismounted to enter the house.

As he crossed the threshold, a hand was laid on his shoulder; and, turning hastily, he saw Damas, whose voice he had recognised when he answered the challenge of the National Guardsmen at the bridge.

"Are you here in force?" asked Choiseul.

"I am alone, or nearly alone. My men refused to follow me, — at least all but five or six of them."

"What a misfortune ! But never mind, I have forty hussars. We must see what we can do with them."

The king was just receiving a deputation from the municipal authorities. This deputation had come to say that as the people of Varennes were so very fortunate as to have the king among them, they had come for his orders.

"My orders !" responded the king. "Then have my carriages made ready, and I will leave at once."

It is hard to say what the answer to this demand would have been, for just then the hurrying hoof-beats of Choiseul's horses were heard, and through the windows the party could see the hussars approaching, sabres in hand.

The queen started, and a ray of joy shot from her eye.

"We are saved !" she whispered to Madame Elizabeth.

"God grant it !" answered this lamb-like creature, who regarded everything as coming directly from God, good and evil, hope and despair.

The king straightened himself up and listened. The town officials glanced anxiously at one another.

Then a great noise was heard in the room below, which was guarded by peasants armed with scythes. A few words were interchanged; then came a brief struggle, and Monsieur de Choiseul, bare-headed and sword in hand, appeared in the doorway. Behind him could be seen Damas' pale but resolute face.

There was a threatening expression on the countenances of these two officers which put the deputies to flight; thus leaving an open space between the new-comers and the royal family.

When the officers entered the room, this was the scene that met their gaze.

In the middle of the apartment was a table, on which stood a bottle of wine, several glasses, and a loaf of bread. The king and queen were listening to the deputation. Madame Elizabeth and Madame Royale were seated near the window, and the little dauphin, overcome with

fatigue, had fallen asleep upon the bed. Beside the bed sat Madame de Tourzel, with her face buried in her hands, and behind her stood Madame Brunier and Madame de Neuville. The two guardsmen, Malden and Valory, and Isidore de Charny, were lying back in their chairs in the shadow, overwhelmed by grief and weariness.

On seeing Choiseul, the queen darted across the room and seized his hand.

"Ah, Monsieur de Choiseul, it is you! You are welcome indeed!"

"Alas, I come very late, it seems to me."

"No matter, provided you come in good company."

"On the contrary, madame, we come almost alone. Monsieur de Dandoins has been forcibly detained by the authorities of Sainte Menehould, and Damas' men have deserted him."

The queen shook her head despondently.

"But where is Bouillé, and where is Raigecourt?" continued the duke, glancing around as he spoke.

"I have not had the pleasure of seeing either of those gentlemen," replied the king.

"I assure you, sire, upon my word of honour that I am confident they must have been killed in front of the wheels of your coach," exclaimed Damas, earnestly.

"Well, what is to be done?" asked the king.

"Your Majesty shall be saved, at all hazards. Give us your orders," responded Damas.

"I have forty hussars with me," added Choiseul. "They have ridden fifty miles to-day, but they will be able to go on as far as Dun."

"But how about ourselves?" inquired the king.

"Listen, sire, for this is the only plan I can think of," responded the duke. "I have forty hussars, as I told you just now. Seven shall dismount, and you shall ride one of the horses, with the dauphin in front of you; the queen can take the second horse, Madame Elizabeth the third, Madame Royale another, and Madame de Tourzel

and the other ladies the remaining three. We will surround you closely with the thirty-three hussars we have left, and cut our way through the crowd. This is our only chance, it seems to me. Consider the proposal well, but decide as soon as possible; for in an hour, a half hour, yes, perhaps a quarter of an hour, my men may be won over to the other side."

Choiseul paused, and stood anxiously awaiting the king's response. The queen seemed to favour the scheme, and scrutinised her husband's face closely and eagerly; but he seemed to avoid her gaze, and to chafe against the influence it exerted over him.

At last, looking Choiseul full in the face, he answered: "Yes, I know very well that this is probably our only chance of escape; but can you vouch for it that in this unequal conflict between thirty-three men and seven or eight hundred, a stray shot may not kill my son or my daughter, the queen or my sister?"

"If such a catastrophe should occur, and occur because you had yielded to my persuasions, there would be nothing for me to do but kill myself before your Majesty's very eyes."

"Then, instead of allowing ourselves to be carried away by any such desperate project, let us consider the situation calmly."

The queen sighed heavily, and retreated a step or two. As she made this movement, which indicated her regret and disappointment incontrovertibly, she found herself face to face with Isidore, who, his attention being attracted by a noise in the street, had started towards the window.

They exchanged a few words, and Isidore darted out of the room.

The king, without seeming to notice what had just taken place between Isidore and the queen, continued,—

"The municipal authorities do not refuse to let me continue my journey; they only ask me to remain here until daybreak. I say nothing of Count Olivier de Charny, who

has always manifested such devotion towards us, and of whom we have no intelligence; but the Chevalier de Bouillé and Monsieur de Raigecourt left, I am told, about ten minutes after our arrival, to summon the Marquis de Bouillé with his body of troops, which must certainly be in readiness. If I were alone, I should adopt your plan; but my wife, our children, my sister, and these ladies—I cannot think of risking their lives with a force so small as yours; and an even larger number of hussars would have to dismount, for I certainly would not leave my three bodyguards here. It is three o'clock now," he added, drawing out his watch. "Young Bouillé left half an hour after midnight. His father must certainly have had troops stationed at different points along the road, and they will lose no time in coming as soon as they are informed by the chevalier. It is not more than twenty miles to Stenay, and a man can easily make the journey on horseback in two hours, or two hours and a half; so detachments of troops will soon begin to come in. By five or six o'clock the Marquis de Bouillé will be here in person, and we shall then be able to leave Varennes and continue our journey without the slightest danger to my family."

Monsieur de Choiseul recognised the good sense of this reasoning; and yet his instinct told him that there are times when it is not well to listen to reason.

So he turned to the queen, with a look which seemed to implore her to give him different orders, or at least to revoke those he had just received; but she shook her head sadly.

"I cannot take such a responsibility upon myself," she said. "It is for the king to command, and for me to obey. Besides, I agree with the king, that Monsieur de Bouillé is sure to arrive soon."

Monsieur de Choiseul bowed and stepped back, taking Damas, whom he wished to consult, with him, and also beckoning to the two guardsmen to come and take part in the conference.

CHAPTER XLVI.

POOR CATHERINE!

THERE was very little change in the appearance of the apartment.

Madame Royale had succumbed to fatigue, and Madame de Tourzel had put her to bed beside her brother. Madame Elizabeth was sitting beside the bed, leaning her head against one of the posts.

The queen, rigid with anger, was standing near the mantel, gazing alternately at the king, who was seated on a bale of merchandise, and at the four officers, who were deliberating near the door.

An aged woman, an octogenarian, in fact, was kneeling by the children's bedside, as if before an altar. It was the solicitor's grandmother. Impressed by the beauty of the two children and the imposing air of the queen, she had fallen upon her knees and was praying in a whisper, tears streaming down her face the while.

What was the petition she addressed to heaven? Was it that God would forgive these two angels, or that these two angels would forgive mankind?

Sausse and the municipal officers had withdrawn, promising the king that the horses should soon be put to his carriage; but the queen's face showed that she placed no dependence whatever upon this promise, — showed it so plainly that Monsieur de Choiseul remarked to the gentlemen around him, —

"We must not be deceived by the apparent composure of the king and queen. The situation is not exactly desperate, or at least not *hopeless*; but we must look at it as it

really is. It is more than probable that the Marquis de Bouillé has been notified by this time, and that he will be here between five and six in the morning, as he must be somewhere between Dun and Stenay with a detachment of the Royal German regiment. It is even possible that his advance guard may arrive here a little sooner; but we must not forget that we are surrounded by four or five hundred determined opponents, and that the arrival of Bouillé's troops will be a moment of great peril and frightful turmoil. The people here will do their best to get the king out of Varennes; they may even try to make him mount a horse, in order to take him back to Clermont. His life will be threatened, and the infuriated populace may even attempt to kill him; but this danger will last only a few minutes. As soon as the hussars are once in the town, the trouble will be over. Consequently, we shall be compelled to hold out only about ten minutes, and there are ten of us. As things are arranged here, we can reasonably hope that they will not be able to kill more than one of us a minute, so the day will be ours."

The auditors contented themselves with nodding their assent. This proposal, though involving devotion unto death, was accepted as simply and quietly as it was made. "What I think we had better do, gentlemen, is this," continued Choiseul. "As soon as we hear the first shot, we will rush into the adjoining room, kill all the people who happen to be in there, and so secure possession of the staircase and windows. There are three windows, — three of us will defend them; the remaining seven will guard the staircase, which it will be an easy matter to defend, as from its winding shape one man can without difficulty hold five or six assailants at bay. The bodies of those who are killed will serve as a rampart for those who are left; so I'll wager a hundred to one that the troops will be masters of the town before the last one of us is killed, and if we should be, the place we shall occupy in history will richly reward us for our devotion."

The young men grasped each other's hands like Spartans on the eve of battle, then each man selected his post. The two guardsmen and Isidore de Charny were to defend the three windows overlooking the street, Monsieur de Choiseul was to stand at the foot of the staircase; next to him was to be Damas, then Floirac, then Foucq, and then the non-commissioned officers who had remained faithful to Damas, and who had also taken part in the conference.

These arrangements had only just been concluded when an increased commotion was apparent in the street below. It was caused by the arrival of another delegation, composed of Sausse, — who seemed to be the chief element in every deputation, — Captain Hannonet of the National Guards, and three or four of the municipal authorities.

They were duly announced, and the king, believing they had come to inform him that his horses had at last been put to the carriage, ordered them to be admitted.

They entered, and the young officers fancied they detected a determined expression, which boded the king no good, on their faces.

Almost at the same moment Isidore came upstairs, exchanged a few words with the queen, and hastily left the room again.

The queen turned as pale as death, and, stepping back, clutched the bed upon which her children were sleeping, as if for support. The king looked inquiringly at the envoys, and waited for them to speak; but they only bowed, without uttering a word. So Louis XVI. pretended to misunderstand their intentions, and said, —

“Gentlemen, the French people are only led astray temporarily. Their devotion and attachment to their sovereign are profound and genuine. Weary of the insults and contumely to which I have been subjected in my capital for some time past, I have decided to retire to the provinces, where the sacred flame of royalty and devotion still burns brightly.”

The envoys bowed again, and the king continued, —

"I am ready and willing to give a convincing proof of the confidence I feel in my people; so I shall take from here an escort, made up half of National Guardsmen and half of regulars, to the place whither I have decided to retire for the present. Consequently, I must ask you to select half my escort from among your own citizens, and to have horses put to my carriage at once."

There was a silence; Sausse was probably waiting for Hannonet to speak, and the captain was waiting for Sausse. At last, Hannonet bowed and said: "I should be very glad, sire, if I could obey your Majesty's commands; but there is an article in the Constitution which forbids the king to leave the kingdom, and also forbids any loyal Frenchman to aid him in his flight."

The king started angrily, and Hannonet, with a gesture as if entreating the monarch to hear him through, continued, —

"Consequently the authorities of Varennes have decided that before permitting the king to proceed any further, a courier shall be sent to Paris to ascertain the will of the National Assembly."

Great drops of sweat bedewed the king's brow, the queen bit her lip wrathfully, and Madame Elizabeth lifted her eyes and hands to heaven.

"Indeed, gentlemen, am I, then, to understand that I am no longer master of my own movements?" said the king, with a dignity which always seemed to manifest itself in him on any great emergency. "In that case, I am more of a slave than the least of my subjects."

"Sire, you are always the master," responded the captain of the National Guard; "but all men, kings as well as ordinary citizens, are alike bound by their oaths. You have taken an oath. Be the first to fulfil that oath, sire, and obey the laws. It will not only be a noble example that you set, but a sacred duty that you perform."

During this conversation the duke gazed questioningly at the queen several times, and apparently received an

affirmative answer to his mute inquiry, for he went downstairs.

The king understood that if he submitted to this rebellion on the part of an insignificant town, — and, regarded from his point of view, it *was* a rebellion, — his cause was irretrievably lost.

"Gentlemen, this is nothing more or less than an outrage on your part," he replied; "but I am not so entirely at your mercy as you may suppose. I have forty faithful soldiers in front of this house, and a thousand other soldiers in close proximity to Varennes. I command you to have my horses harnessed. Do you understand me? This is both my wish and my command."

The queen stepped to his side. "Good, sire, good!" she exclaimed. "Let us risk our lives if necessary, but never forget our honour and our dignity."

"And if we should refuse to obey your Majesty, what will be the consequences?" asked Hannonet.

"I shall be compelled to resort to force, and you will be responsible for the blood I refused to shed until forced to do so by you."

"So be it. You summon your hussars, and I will summon the National Guard."

And he went downstairs in his turn.

The king and queen gazed at each other in dismay. Perhaps neither of them would have dared to risk such an attempt, had not the wife of the solicitor entered, and, pushing aside her grandmother, who was still praying by the bed, remarked to the queen with the bluntness and brusqueness of a woman of the people, —

"So you're really the queen, madame?"

The queen turned hastily, cut to the quick by the familiar manner of the speaker.

"Yes," she replied, "at least I thought so, an hour ago."

"Well, if you're the queen," continued Madame Sausse, undaunted, "we pay you twenty-four millions a year to

keep your place. It is a very good place, it seems to me, as you're so well paid. Why do you want to give it up?"

The queen uttered a cry of indignation, and, turning to the king, exclaimed, —

"Anything, anything, rather than submit to such indignities!"

And, catching up the dauphin, who was still asleep on the bed, she ran to the window, and, opening it, cried, —

"Let us show ourselves to the people, sire, and see if their minds are entirely poisoned against us. If they are, we will appeal to the soldiery, and encourage them with voice and gesture. They deserve at least that much, men who are willing to die for us !"

The king followed her mechanically out upon the balcony.

The wildest confusion and disorder pervaded the square.

Many of Choiseul's hussars had dismounted; the others were still on horseback. Those on foot were swallowed up in the crowd, and their horses had been led off in different directions. These men had already been won over to the National Cause; but those on horseback seemed to be still under the influence of Choiseul, who was haranguing them in German; but their commander saw that at least half the original number had deserted.

Standing a little apart, was Isidore, with his knife in his hand, like a hunter watching for his prey.

Cries of "The king! the king!" resounded from five hundred throats as the royal family appeared upon the balcony, the queen still holding the dauphin in her arms.

If Louis XVI. had been clad in his royal robes, or even in uniform, or if he had spoken in loud and impressive tones, his voice might even then have seemed to the people like the voice of God, or at least of one sent by God, and perhaps he might have regained the influence he had lost; but in the searching light of dawn, in that old gray coat, with his beard three days old, and his hair unpowdered, his appearance was much against him. He

was pale, too, with fatigue, and his eyes were expressionless and devoid of lustre, as he stammered out, "Gentlemen! My children! My children! Gentlemen!"

Ah, the sight upon that balcony was one that neither the friends nor enemies of royalty cared to see. And yet Choiseul shouted, "Long live the king!" and Isidore shouted, "Long live the king!" And such is the prestige that attaches to royalty, that in spite of his appearance which harmonised so little with one's idea of the head of a great nation, many voices repeated: "Long live the king!"

In response, came a shout from the commander of the National Guards,—a shout which met with a very different greeting, and was re-echoed again and again,—"Long live the Nation!" Under such circumstances this shout meant rebellion; and the royal couple could see that it was at once taken up by a number of the hussars.

Marie Antoinette uttered a cry of rage, and, pressing the dauphin to her breast, she leaned over the balcony, and through her set teeth hissed out the word "Wretches!" at the crowd below. Several persons heard it, and answered the epithet with threats and vituperations.

Choiseul was in despair, and felt tempted to kill himself then and there; but he resolved to make one more effort.

"Rally, hussars, for your honour's sake, and save the king!" he shouted.

But at that very instant a new actor appeared upon the scene. It was Drouet, who had just come from the Town Hall, where he had persuaded the officials to prevent the king from continuing his journey.

Walking straight up to Choiseul, he called out,—

"So you intend to carry off the king, whether or no! Very well; but I tell you one thing, you'll take him away a corpse!"

Choiseul advanced upon Drouet, with his sword drawn; but the commander of the National Guards interfered.

"If you go a step further, I will kill you!" he cried.

As he uttered these words, another man darted forward before any one could hinder him. It was Isidore de Charny. The man for whom he had been lying in wait was Drouet.

"Back, back!" he shouted; "that man belongs to me."

And, knife in hand, he rushed upon Drouet.

Two shots rang out upon the air simultaneously, one from a pistol, the other from a musket. The pistol-ball flattened itself against Isidore's collar-bone; the musket ball pierced his breast. The shots were fired so close to him that the poor fellow seemed to be positively enveloped in a cloud of flame and smoke.

They saw him throw up his arms, and heard him say, "Poor Catherine!"

Then, dropping his knife, he fell across his horse's crupper, and rolled to the ground.

The queen uttered a shriek of horror, and, letting the dauphin slip from her arms, fell backward, without seeing a man who was coming at full speed from the direction of Dun.

The king assisted the queen into the house and closed the window. It was not a few hussars on foot that shouted, "Long live the Nation!" now, but the entire crowd. In that multitude only a score of hussars on horseback remained faithful, — the only hope of royalty in distress!

The queen sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands. She was thinking how she had just seen Isidore fall at her feet and die for her sake, as she had seen his brother George die. The noise made by the hasty opening of a door made her look up, and we will not endeavour to describe the feelings that stirred the heart of the woman and the queen at that instant.

Olivier de Charny, pale and covered with blood from his brother's last embrace, was standing in the doorway.

As for the king, he seemed crushed to the very earth.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CHARNY.

THE room was filled with National Guardsmen and a crowd of citizens attracted there by curiosity.

The queen's first impulse was to rush to Charny, wipe the blood from his face with her handkerchief, and whisper those words of consolation which go straight from heart to heart; but she realised the necessity of repressing this impulse, and only ventured to rise from her chair and extend both hands to him, murmuring under her breath, "Olivier! Olivier!"

Outwardly calm, he waved the spectators aside, and said in a firm but quiet voice: "Pardon me, but I must speak to their Majesties alone."

The National Guardsmen attempted to give him to understand that they were there to prevent the king from holding any communication with outsiders; but Charny compressed his lips, frowned, and opened his riding coat, thus disclosing to view a brace of pistols; then in tones even quieter, but infinitely more threatening than before, he repeated, "Gentlemen, I have already had the honour to inform you that I must speak to the king and queen in private."

And as he spoke he again motioned the intruders to leave the room.

Encouraged by the power the count's marvellous self-control seemed to exert over others as well as over himself, Damas and the guardsmen pushed the interlopers towards the door, and finally compelled them to vacate the apartment.

The queen realised more than ever now the wonderful service such a man could have rendered, had not etiquette demanded that Madame de Tourzel should occupy a seat in the king's coach in his stead.

Glancing around to satisfy himself that there was no one near the queen except her faithful subjects, he said, approaching her, —

"Here I am at last, madame, and I have seventy hussars that I think I can rely upon at the edge of the town. What are your orders?"

"But tell me, first, what happened to you, my poor Charny," exclaimed the queen, in German.

Charny made a slight sign to the queen to indicate that Malden was within hearing, and that he too understood German.

"Alas! seeing nothing more of you, we concluded that you must be dead," she continued, in French this time.

"Unfortunately, it is not I who am dead. It is my poor brother Isidore." He could not repress a tear. "But my turn will come," he added in a low tone.

"But tell me, Charny, what happened to you, and why you vanished from our sight so mysteriously," said the queen; adding in a whisper, and in the German tongue, "Olivier, you have not treated us well, — me especially."

Charny bowed as he said in reply, "I supposed my brother had explained the cause of my temporary absence from your side."

"Yes, I know you were pursuing that man, that rascally Drouet; and we feared for a while that this pursuit had involved you in some dire calamity."

"It did. In spite of my efforts, I did not overtake Drouet in time. A postilion, on his way back from Clermont, informed Drouet that your carriage, instead of being on the road to Verdun, as he supposed, had taken the road leading from Clermont to Varennes. Thereupon, Drouet plunged into the Forest of Argonne. I fired at him with both my pistols, but they were not loaded. In my haste I

had mounted Dandoins' horse at Sainte Menehould, instead of the one intended for me. What shall we call this, madame? Fate? Nevertheless, I followed Drouet into the forest; but unfortunately I was not familiar with it, while he knew every foot of the ground. The darkness, too, had become so intense that I could not see the scoundrel; but as long as I could hear him, I rushed on in the direction of the sound, but when the sound died away I had nothing to guide me. I am a man, madame, as you know, and tears are strangers to my eyes; but there in the darkness, in the middle of that great forest, I wept tears of fury and uttered cries of rage."

The queen extended her hand to him.

Charny bowed low as he touched the trembling hand lightly with his lips.

"No one came in answer to my calls," continued Charny, "and I wandered about in the woods all night, and at day-break found myself near the village of Gèves, on the road from Varennes to Dun. I asked myself if you had been fortunate enough to elude Drouet, as he had eluded me. It was barely possible; and in that case you must have passed through Varennes, and there was nothing for me to do but hasten after you. But had you been stopped at Varennes? In that case, being entirely alone, my devotion would prove equally futile; so I finally decided to hasten on to Dun. Just before I reached that village I met Deslon with a hundred hussars. He was very uneasy. He had heard nothing, but he had met Jules de Bouillé and Raigecourt riding at full speed towards Stenay. Why they did not tell Deslon the state of affairs, I do not know, unless it was because they distrusted him, though I know him to be an honourable and loyal gentleman. I immediately surmised that your party had been arrested in Varennes, and that young Bouillé and Raigecourt had gone to notify General Bouillé. I told Deslon so, and urged him to follow me with his hussars, which he at once consented to do, leaving thirty men to guard the bridge

over the Meuse, however. An hour later we reached Varennes, having travelled twelve miles in that time. But we found barricade after barricade confronting us. To attack them would have been folly, so I sounded a parley. An officer of the National Guards presented himself, and I asked permission to rejoin my hussars, stationed in the town. This request was refused; then I asked permission to come in and receive my orders from the king; and as they were about to refuse this request as they had the first, I put spurs to my horse, cleared the first barricade, then the second, and, guided by the uproar, rode through the town at full gallop, and reached the square just as your Majesty was leaving the balcony. And now I await your Majesty's orders."

Again the queen pressed Charny's hands in both her own; then, turning to the king, who seemed to have lapsed into a state of torpor, she asked, —

"Have you heard what happened to your faithful servant the count, sire?"

But as the king answered never a word, she arose and went to him, exclaiming: "Sire, we have no time to lose. Unfortunately, we have wasted too much already. Here is Monsieur de Charny with seventy trusty men, and he awaits your orders."

Then, seeing the king shake his head despondently, she exclaimed: "Sire, sire, in Heaven's name give your orders."

And Charny pleaded as eloquently with his eyes as the queen pleaded with her voice.

"My orders?" faltered the king; "I have no orders to give. I am a prisoner. Do whatever you think best."

"Very well, that is all I ask," answered the queen. Then, drawing Charny aside, she whispered: "You have *carte blanche*. Do whatever you think best, as the king says; but act promptly and decisively, or we are indeed lost."

"That is true, madame," replied the count. "Let me

consult with these other gentlemen a minute, and whatever plan we decide upon shall be carried into execution at once."

Just then Choiseul entered, holding in his hand some papers wrapped in a bloodstained handkerchief, which he held out to Charny without a word. The count understood instantly that these were papers which had been found on his brother's body, and he raised the package to his lips and kissed it reverently.

The queen could not repress her sobs; but Charny did not falter. Placing the papers in his breast pocket, he said quietly: "Gentlemen, will you aid me in the last great effort I am about to make?"

"We are ready to give our lives," was the prompt reply.

"I have seventy hussars. While I attack the barricades in front, will you divert the attention of our opponents by an attack in the rear? Under cover of that, I think I can force the barricades, penetrate to this spot, and carry off the king."

The young men's only answer was to offer Charny their hands.

Again turning to the queen, the count said: "Madame, in one hour your Majesty will be free, or we shall all be dead."

"Oh, count, count, do not utter that word. It sounds too ominous!"

Charny bowed in silence and walked to the door; but as he was about to place his hand on the latch, the door opened, and a new personage entered, to play his part in this already complicated drama.

This was a man about forty years of age, with a stern and gloomy face. His collar was turned back at the throat, and his coat was unbuttoned. His bloodshot eyes and dusty clothing also indicated that, urged on by relentless passion, he had travelled on the wings of the wind. He carried a brace of pistols in his belt, and a sword hung at his side.

Breathless and almost voiceless when he opened the door, the sight of the king and queen seemed to afford him intense relief. A vengeful smile overspread his features; and, without paying the slightest attention to the less important persons present, he paused in the doorway, filling it almost completely with his powerful frame, and raising his hand commandingly, exclaimed, —

“In the name of the National Assembly, you are all my prisoners.”

With one swift movement, Choiseul was in front of him, pistol in hand. He, too, raised his hand, to blow out the brains of this new-comer, who seemed to excel all his predecessors in insolence and determination; but with an equally rapid movement the queen grasped the duke’s uplifted hand, and in a low tone said, —

“Do not hasten our destruction, monsieur. Be prudent. We are gaining time by all these interruptions, and General Bouillé cannot be far off.”

“You are right, madame,” replied Choiseul, returning the pistol to his breast.

The queen glanced around for Charny, surprised that he had not been the first to confront this new peril; but, strange to say, Charny seemed anxious to escape the notice of this intruder, and had hastily withdrawn to the farther end of the room. Still, knowing Charny as she did, the queen did not doubt for an instant that he would emerge from the shadow and explain this mystery when the right moment came.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ONE ENEMY MORE.

DURING this entire scene, the messenger from the National Assembly whom Choiseul was threatening had seemed to take no note of the fact that his life was in peril, but to be under the influence of some sentiment much more powerful than the fear of death. The expression of his face could not be mistaken. It was that of a hunter who has at last discovered the lion, the lioness, and the cubs which together devoured his only child.

But on hearing the word *prisoners*, which so excited Choiseul's ire, the king raised his head, and seemed to wake from his lethargy.

"Prisoners! In the name of the National Assembly, prisoners!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean? I do not understand you."

"What I say is very simple and easy to understand, nevertheless," replied the intruder. "Notwithstanding the oath you took not to leave France, you are fleeing from your country secretly, breaking your word, betraying the people, betraying the Nation. But the people are aroused, the Nation is calling her citizens to arms, and the Nation is speaking to you now through the voice of one of the least of your subjects. Sire, in the name of the Nation, in the name of the Assembly, you are my prisoner; for this voice is none the less powerful because it comes from one of the lowly."

From the adjoining store-room came sounds of applause, accompanied, or rather followed, by frantic "Bravoes!"

"Madame," the duke said to the queen in a whispered aside, "do not forget that it was you who checked me just now, and that you would not be subjected to such insolence but for the compassion you showed this man a moment ago."

"All this is nothing if we can avenge ourselves," muttered the queen.

"Yes, but what if we do not avenge ourselves?" responded Choiseul, gloomily.

The queen groaned.

But Charny reached over Monsieur de Choiseul's shoulder and touched the queen on the arm.

"Leave me to deal with this man; I will attend to him!" hissed the count through his set teeth.

Meanwhile, the king, overwhelmed by this new blow, gazed with astonishment at this stern and determined man who dared to use such energetic language to a king, and who spoke, not in the name of his Majesty, Louis XVI., but of the Assembly and the Nation; and with this astonishment was mingled not a little curiosity, for it seemed to the monarch that he had seen this man somewhere before, though he could not recall when or where. At last the king said: "After all, what do you want with me? Speak."

"I want you and your family to promise not to take another step towards foreign lands."

"And you come, doubtless, with several hundred armed men to impede my progress," said the king.

"No, sire, I am alone; or, rather, there are two of us, — an aide of General Lafayette's, and myself, an humble peasant. But the Assembly has issued a decree, and expects us to execute it, and it be shall done."

"Give me the decree, so that I may at least read it," said the king.

"I have n't it, but my companion has. My companion was sent by General Lafayette and by the Assembly to see that the orders of the Nation are carried out; I came, partly at Mayor Bailly's request, but principally of my

own accord to watch my companion and blow his brains out if he balks."

The queen, the duke, and the other persons present listened in amazement. Hitherto, they had seen the populace either in a state of humility or of fury, either in the character of humble petitioners or murderers. Now they saw, for the first time, a man of the people standing erect with folded arms, conscious of his own power, and asserting his rights.

Louis XVI. perceived that there was nothing to hope for from a man of this sort, and was anxious to put an end to the conversation as soon as possible; so he said: "Where is your companion?"

"Here, behind me."

He stepped aside as he spoke, leaving the doorway clear, and through it they caught sight of a young man in uniform, leaning against a window. His clothing, too, was in great disorder, his face was begrimed with dust and tears, and he held a folded paper in his hand.

It was young Romeuf, Lafayette's youthful aide-de-camp, whose acquaintance the reader made during young Louis de Bouillé's visit to Paris. At that time the young man was a patriot, an ardent patriot; but of late the surveillance of the queen had been intrusted to him. He had been in the habit of accompanying the queen whenever she left the palace, and in all his relations with her he had displayed a deference and delicacy for which the queen felt deeply grateful.

It was only natural, therefore, that she should exclaim: "What, is it you!" on beholding him. Then, with the deep sigh of a woman who sees a power which she had believed invincible fail her, she exclaimed: "I would never have believed it!"

"Ah!" muttered the other messenger, "it was a good thing I came, I see."

Romeuf advanced slowly, with eyes downcast, and the decree in his hand; but the impatient monarch took a

quick step towards him, and snatched the paper from his grasp.

"There is no longer any king in France, it seems," he exclaimed, after perusing it.

Romeuf's companion smiled, as much as to say: "I am perfectly well aware of it."

On hearing the king's words, the queen turned, as if about to question him.

"Listen, madame," he cried. "This is the decree the Assembly has dared to pass!"

And in a voice trembling with anger and indignation he read the following:—

"The Assembly directs the Minister of the Interior to send messengers into the different departments immediately, with orders to all public officials, National Guards, and troops of the line to arrest or cause the arrest of all persons leaving the kingdom, and also to prevent the exportation of goods of every kind, such as arms and ammunition, gold and silver in any form, and horses and carriages. And in case these messengers overtake the king or any members of the royal family, or any person or persons who may have aided or abetted them in their flight, then the aforesaid public officials, National Guards, and troops of the line shall take all possible measures to check their flight and prevent the continuance of their journey, and report the fact immediately to this legislative body."

The queen listened in a sort of bewilderment; but when the king had finished, she tossed her head, as if to reassure herself.

"Impossible!" she exclaimed, extending her hand for the paper. "Give it to me!"

Monsieur de Romeuf's companion reassured the National Guards and other patriots of Varennes with a smile. That word "Impossible!" so scornfully uttered by the queen, had disquieted them a little.

"Read it, madame, read it, if you still doubt!" exclaimed the king, bitterly. "Read this decree, written and signed by the president of the National Assembly."

"And what man has dared to write and sign such a decree?"

"A nobleman," replied the king; "the Marquis de Beauharnais."

Was it not a strange thing that this decree, which arrested the flight of the king and the royal family, should bear a name which, though obscure up to that time, was to be connected in a conspicuous manner with the history of the early part of the nineteenth century?

The queen took the decree and read it with compressed lips and frowning brow.

Then the king took it from her for a second perusal, after which he tossed it disdainfully upon the bed where the dauphin and Madame Royale were sleeping.

At this, the queen, unable to control herself any longer, angrily seized the paper, crumpled it viciously in her hands, and threw it far from her, exclaiming,—

"Be careful, monsieur; I will not have my children contaminated with such a paper."

This act created an uproar in the adjoining room, and the National Guardsmen there made a movement as if to rush into the apartment occupied by the illustrious fugitives.

A cry of terror escaped the lips of Lafayette's aide-de-camp; but his companion uttered a cry of rage.

"So they insult the Assembly! they insult the Nation! they insult the people!" he growled. "So be it!"

And, turning to the already excited men, armed with guns, scythes, and sabres, he shouted,—

"Help, citizens, help!"

Again there was a frantic movement in the crowd,—a movement that was a sort of continuation of the first; and Heaven only knows what the result would have been, had not Charny, who had held himself aloof heretofore, now come forward, and, grasping the arm of the unknown messenger just as he was about to draw his sword, said, —

"A word with you, if you please, Monsieur Billot. I wish to speak with you."

Billot, for it was he, uttered a cry of astonishment in his turn, and became as pale as death. He stood undecided for a moment, then, replacing his half-drawn sword in its sheath.

"So be it!" he responded. "I, too, have something I want to say to you, Monsieur de Charny."

Then, turning towards the door, he added: "Make room for us, citizens, if you please. I want to have a short talk with this gentleman. But you may rest easy, comrades," he added in a lower tone, "for neither the wolf, the she-wolf, nor their cubs shall escape us. I am here, and I will be responsible for them."

And although this man was as much a stranger to all the others' as he was to the king and his adherents, — Charny alone excepted, — the crowd seemed to recognise his right to give orders, for they backed out of the room. Moreover, each man was anxious to tell his friends below what had occurred, and to advise the patriots to keep a closer watch than ever.

Meanwhile, Charny had whispered to the queen, —

"Monsieur de Romeuf is on your side, madame; I leave him here with you. Do the best you can with him."

This could be the more easily done from the fact that when he entered the adjoining room, Charny closed the door behind him and placed his back against it, thus preventing any one even, Billot himself, from gaining access to the chamber.

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